Israel's War, America's Equivocation

THE NEW REPUBLIC

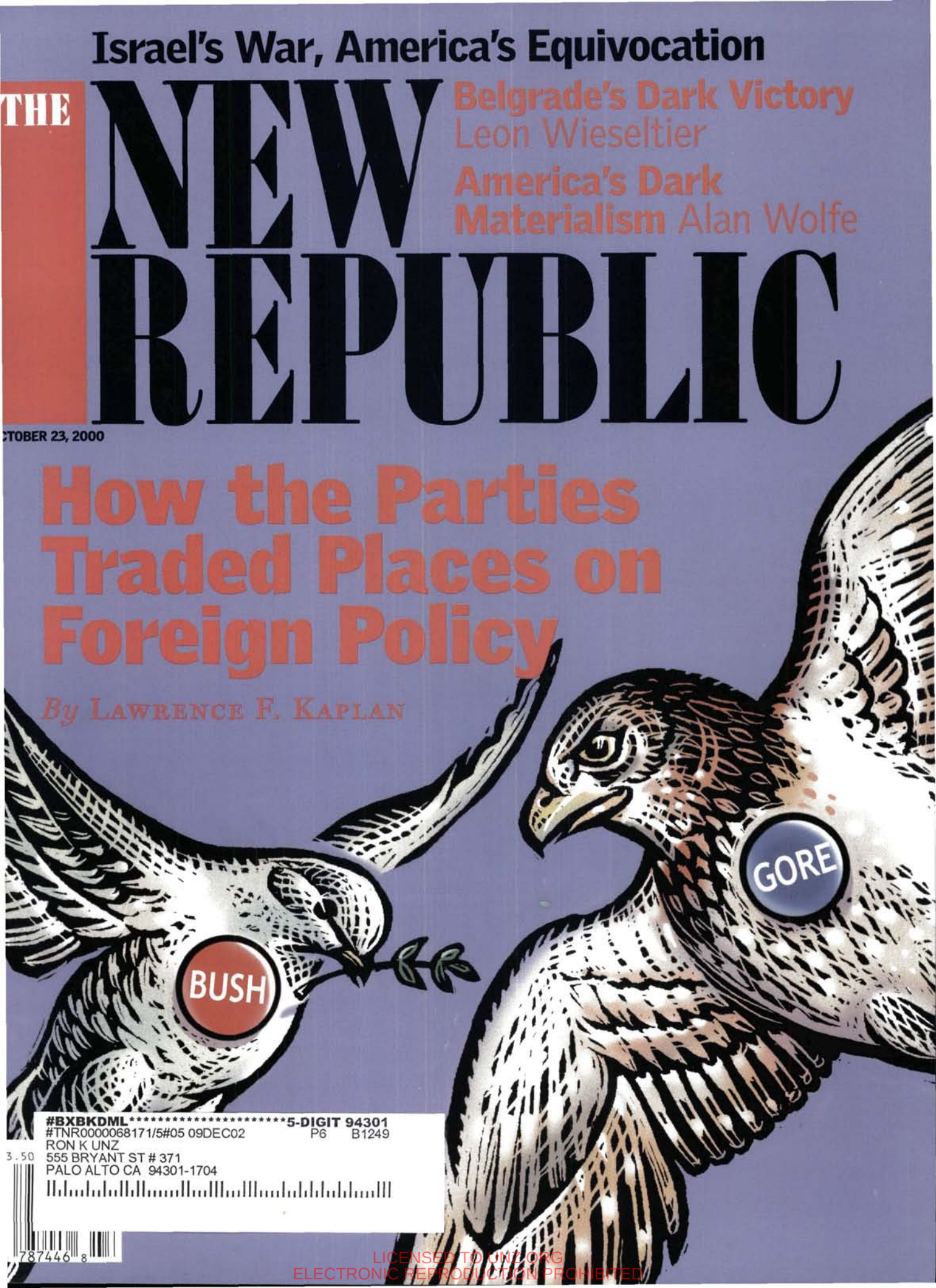
Belgrade's Dark Victory
Leon Wieseltier

America's Dark Materialism Alan Wolfe

CTOBER 23, 2000

How the Parties Traded Places on Foreign Policy

By Lawrence F. Kaplan



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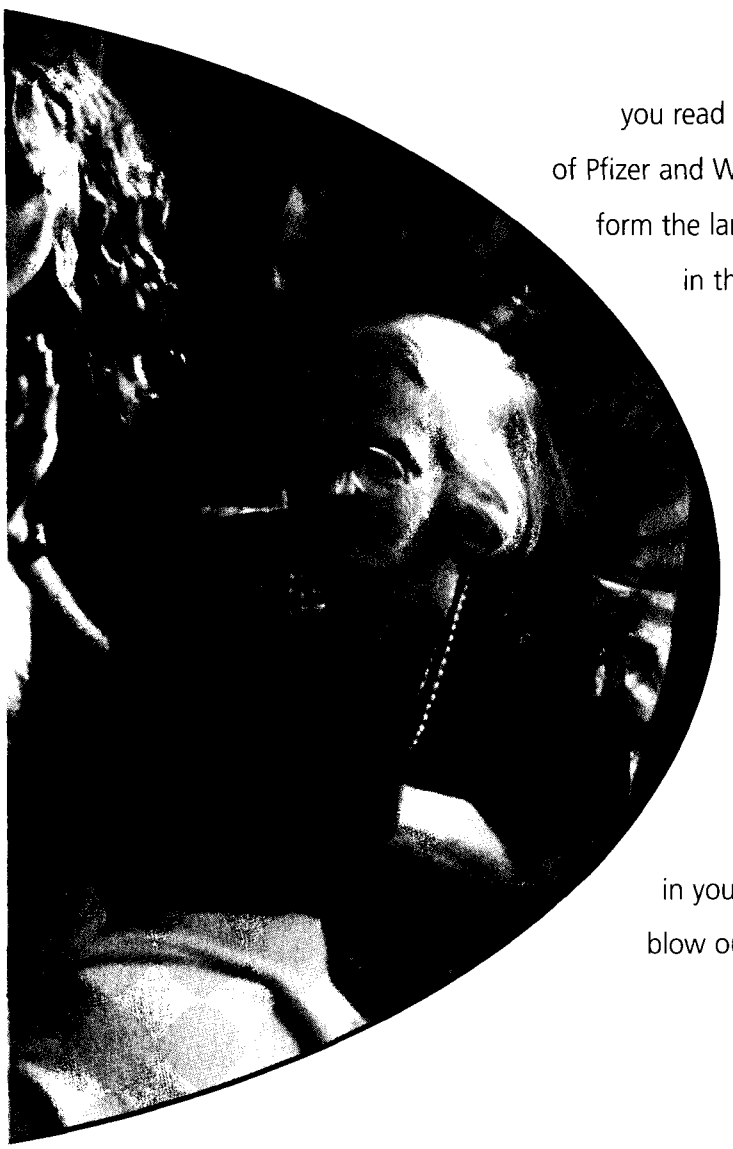

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Backwater

TO THE EDITORS:

How could race relations in so conservative a state as Texas be less rancorous than in liberal, progressive California? Why has there been a backlash against immigration in enlightened California but not in reactionary Texas? For Benjamin Soskis, the solution to this seeming paradox is simple: Texas is not as conservative as the stereotype might suggest ("Lone Star Joining," September 18). Let me offer an alternative hypothesis: California's high levels of public spending and taxes fuel nativism and exacerbate racial tensions.

In 1997, a household in Los Angeles with $50,000 in income could expect to pay $4,222 in state and local taxes. For households with $75,000, the tax bill was $7,526. By comparison, families in Houston with equivalent incomes paid between $2,433 and $3,888. Arguably, these taxes buy Californians more in public amenities and services. They also buy lots of political patronage and pork. With so much money at stake, disputes over spending between politicians from different ethnic communities are more likely to resonate beyond the confines of the statehouse.

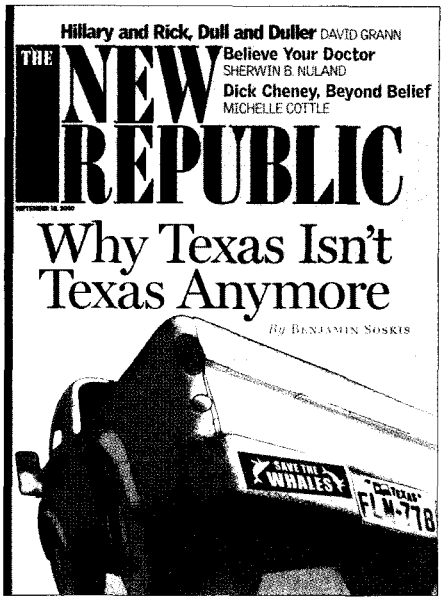
Proposition 187 provides the best example of how lavish public spending pits different ethnic groups against each other. The measure passed because Californians' growing resentment of immigrants is fueled by the high cost of providing them with education, health care, and welfare. No such measure is likely here—Texans do not associate immigrants with higher taxes or fear the state is becoming a welfare magnet. Texas remains a very conservative place—the greater tolerance and ethnic harmony Soskis found is a by-product of its failure to adopt California's "progressive" style of politics.

MICHAEL BEN-GAD
Assistant Professor of Economics
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Half empty

TO THE EDITORS:

Paul Berman's "Left Behind" is a reminder of one of the worst features of our political system and why reformers like myself are with Ralph Nader (September 18). We Nader supporters are supposed to switch to Al Gore, according to Berman, not because without us George W. Bush might win but because without us Gore might not get more than 50 percent of the vote. In most of the world's democracies, no party gets 50 percent, because there are multiple parties. Parties other than the


Hillary and Rick, Dull and Duller DAVID GRANN
Believe Your Doctor SHERWIN B. NULAND
Dick Cheney, Beyond Belief MICHELLE COTTLE
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Why Texas Isn't Texas Anymore
By BENJAMIN SOSKIS
SAVE THE WHALES
FLW-778

two biggest share power, thanks to a system of proportional representation. But in America, Berman tells us, winning isn't enough. The winner must have 50 percent of the vote.

If we cast our votes to put Gore over the top, Berman claims, we'd be giving Gore a nice "left-wing boost." No: Gore would interpret his victory as a "mandate" for more of the incoherent mélange of policies Clinton has given us for almost eight years. Those of us who want America to start acting like a mature advanced democracy—with proportional representation, public campaign financing, single-payer health insurance, and so forth—know that a vote for Gore isn't a vote for any of those things. A vote for Nader is.

MATTHEW SHUGART
Professor of Political Science
Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, California

TO THE EDITORS:

I was glad to see, at last, the phenomenon of the Nader voters addressed and dealt with as a political consequence. Paul Berman is correct in stating that, even if Al Gore wins the election, a 3 to 5 percent vote for Ralph Nader may deny the vice president a clear mandate to present a progressive agenda as president. In the worst case, it could even result in the election of George W. Bush, which would mean there would be no progressive agenda at all in America for years to come.

Berman took me back to the painful memory of my first vote, in 1968, when I wrote in Eugene McCarthy's name for president rather than vote for Hubert Humphrey. Since Humphrey ended up losing by only about half a percentage point, I, and a lot of other disgruntled McCarthy and Robert Kennedy supporters, helped elect Richard Nixon, the only politician in America who had the mad tenacity to keep the Vietnam War going for another six years. That, the conservative Supreme Court still with us today, Watergate, and the general poisoning of American politics weigh heavily on those of us who stubbornly held on to our grudges and refused to grit our teeth and support Humphrey. The Naderites should think long and hard about this lesson before casting their votes this year.

DOUG WEISKOPF
Cincinnati, Ohio

Code words

TO THE EDITORS:

Sarah Wildman's recent story "Jewish Appeal" (September 18) incorrectly cited the Center for Responsive Politics as the source of research we did not do. Wildman wrote, "According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Jews account for more than one-third of the DNC's largest individual donors ($100,000 and above), based on reports released by the Federal Election Commission last month."

In fact, we made the list of top Democratic National Committee donors available to Wildman, and she's the one who figured out who was Jewish and who wasn't. We're not in the business of ethnic or religious coding of campaign contributors, nor will we ever be.

LARRY MAKINSON
Executive Director
Center for Responsive Politics
Washington, D.C.

SARAH WILDMAN REPLIES:

Larry Makinson is correct. The Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) provided me with the raw data—the DNC's list of top donors—and I investigated who on that list was Jewish. I did not mean to imply that CRP was involved in "coding" the ethnic backgrounds of political donors.

Minority leader

TO THE EDITORS:

In your September 18 Notebook, you characterized as "pretty over-the-top praise" a statement by Adam Clymer in *The New York Times* of August 11, 1996: "Probably not since Senator Everett Dirksen and Representative William McCulloch provided a critical balance in getting civil rights bills passed in the 1960s has any member of the congressional minority influenced the agenda as much as Edward M. Kennedy has this year." But Clymer

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was right, and I'd go even further. No senator in the minority, in this century and possibly in American history, has played as significant a role in Congress as Kennedy. I worked for Kennedy from 1989 until 1998, so I may be biased, but consider these facts.

In 1995, the Gingrich Republicans newly in control of the House passed legislation to rescind education funding, eliminate the Department of Education, cut Medicare, end Medicaid, dismantle environmental protections, and slash taxes (primarily for the wealthy). Kennedy took the lead in mobilizing opposition to the Republican agenda in the Senate, and none of the House initiatives made it through. Then, in 1996, Kennedy essentially took control of the Senate floor from Republican Majority Leader Bob Dole and forced the Republican majority to enact his minimum wage increase and the landmark Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill. Dole was so flummoxed by Kennedy that he resigned from the Senate rather than run for president while opposing these popular Kennedy initiatives.

Today Kennedy, still in the minority, continues to set the agenda in Congress. He was the author of the historic Kennedy-Hatch children's health insurance bill, enacted in 1997, and he leads the Democratic drives for increased education funding, another minimum wage increase, a strong patients' bill of rights, and prescription-drug coverage for Medicare.

Clymer hasn't been alone in praising the impact of Kennedy's work. David Shribman of *The Boston Globe* wrote on April 26, 1996, "Here we are, smack in the middle of the Age of Conservatism, right in the redoubt of Republicanism, and the man who seems to be in control is Kennedy." In a profile of Kennedy in *The Washington Post* on July 9, 1996, Lloyd Grove wrote: "Despite being out on the leftward wing of the minority party, Kennedy is somehow still formidable—more perhaps than ever.... This year there has hardly been a scrap of domestic legislation—addressing problems ranging from health insurance to immigration to job training to church arson—that doesn't bear the Kennedy stamp." And Al Hunt wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* on February 19, 1998: "When it comes to legislative prowess, Kennedy is in the prime of his career. In this Republican-run Congress, the liberal Senator Kennedy is arguably the most influential member on either side of either aisle. Some political scientists, looking at his thirty-five-year career, already are suggesting that he may rank as one of the most influential senators in this century."

There may be another senator who has done as much from the minority as Kennedy, but I can't think of one.

NICK LITTLEFIELD
Boston, Massachusetts

In the round

TO THE EDITORS:
In the Notebook item "But Who's Counting?" (September 18), you claim that "the Bushies can't do basic arithmetic," because the total of eleven spending categories is $474.6 billion rather than $474.7 billion. But when you add up a column of numbers that are all rounded, it is common to get a total that is slightly different from the sum of the individual rounded-off items. I'm guessing that this is what happened here, and that the Bush team probably handled the numbers correctly from a statistical point of view, whatever one might think of the substance of the proposal.

JOHN ANDREWS
Via the Internet

Untrue

TO THE EDITORS:
Was it a lapse in editing or did I completely misunderstand Sherwin B. Nuland's review ("Believe Your Doctor," September 18)? In the penultimate sentence of his piece, Nuland urges everyone "to eat less unsaturated fat." He surely must have meant "less saturated fat."

WALT GARDNER
Los Angeles, California

SHERWIN B. NULAND REPLIES:
I almost fainted when I read the penultimate sentence of my review, upon receiving my copy of THE NEW REPUBLIC. In an attempt at expiation, I immediately penned the following and sent it off to the editors:

There once was a surgeon from Yale
Who read his review and turned pale.
He'd inserted an "un"
And was thereby undone,
And so was the pith of his tale. ■

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Judge Not

"BUT WHAT ABOUT the Court?" my liberal friends ask when I voice qualms about the new, liberal Al Gore. Their eyes widen, their faces grow pale, they look at me half-nervously, half-cockily. Didn't George W. Bush say his favorite justice was Antonin Scalia, that reactionary homophobe? Won't he try to reverse *Roe* v. *Wade*? What more do you need to know? Gore played the same card in the first presidential debate. Almost as soon as W. said, in what was for him an elocutionary achievement, that he would appoint "strict constructionists" to the federal bench, Gore pounced. "[W]hen the phrase 'strict constructionist' is used," the vice president warned, "and when the names of Scalia and Thomas are used as benchmarks for who would be appointed, those are ... code words, and nobody should mistake this, for saying that the governor would appoint people who would overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*. I mean, just—it's very clear to me."

For once, it seemed to me, Gore overestimated Bush's intellect. If you believe W. has spent a lot of time calculating the "code words" of strict constructionism, you probably believe Gore's mother-in-law's dog is a lobbyist for the pharmaceutical industry. Consider the context of Bush's famous invocation of Scalia, under interrogation by Tim Russert:

> RUSSERT: Which Supreme Court justice do you really respect?
> BUSH: Well, that's—Anthony [*sic*] Scalia is one.
> RUSSERT: He is someone who wants to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*.
> BUSH: Well, he's a—there's a lot of reasons why I like Judge Scalia.

Not exactly an enthusiastic, ideological endorsement. Later in the interview, as Michael McGough pointed out a couple of weeks back in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, things got even murkier:

> RUSSERT: Will your judges and judge appointments to the Supreme Court be similar to Scalia in their temperament and judicial outlook?
> BUSH: Well, I don't think you're going to find many people to be actually similar to him. He's an unusual man. He's an intellect. The reason I like him so much is I got to know him here in Austin when he came down. He's witty, he's interesting, he's firm. There's a lot of reasons why I like Judge Scalia.

This is the authentic, frat-boy Bush speaking. Scalia wasn't picked; he was rushed. Of course, this could all be careful positioning. Bush could be signaling to the fundamentalist right that he'll appoint anti-Roe justices while telling the rest of us he'll appoint justices entirely on merit. W. says he's against litmus tests, but don't they all? Didn't Reagan? In the debate, Bush challenged his critics to check out his judicial picks in Texas. Fair enough. In his six years, Bush has picked an unusually high number of judges—four state Supreme Court justices and more than 100 judges lower down. What does his record tell us?

It tells us he's a moderate, nonideological Republican. "They have uniformly been chosen for quality," Bill Powers, dean of the law school at the University of Texas, told *The New York Times*. "There has not been a litmus test. They are sort of middle-of-the-road on the court." Even liberal groups agree. According to the *Times*, Court Watch, a liberal watchdog group, found that by the 1998–1999 term, Bush's appointees were "eliminating the excesses of the GOP old guard." The newspaper *Texas Lawyer* did a survey last year of the quality of Bush's picks and reported that the only litmus test Bush seemed to use was character. Even the head of the Texas Trial Lawyers Association, hardly a bulwark of right-wingery, has stated that, while Bush is not as liberal as she would like, he has moved the court firmly back toward the center.

Abortion? This is perhaps the most surprising aspect of the story. Not only has the Bush court defended abortion rights, it has extended them. In a case last year that infuriated the religious right, Texas's Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in favor of a 17-year-old's right to have an abortion without notifying her parents if a judge found her "mature and sufficiently well-informed." Three of the six were appointed by Bush. "It was shocking," Joe Kral, legislative director of the Texas Right to Life Committee, told *The New York Times*. "They've made it way too easy for doctors to perform secret abortions on minors without their parents being told," echoed Joe Pojman, director of Greater Austin Right to Life. Did Bush subsequently chew out the court? Nope. The governor's office remained strictly neutral. Moreover, all the justices personally screened by Bush before they were appointed have told reporters they were never asked about their position on abortion—merely about their broad judicial philosophy. Bush's picks have also been relatively diverse. He has chosen twice as many minorities as the last Republican governor; his Supreme Court picks included a former teacher, a disabled state judge, and a Hispanic. I'm sorry, but that is not the kind of record that sends shivers down my spine.

To be fair, there have been worrisome moments. The speed with which the court decided to hear the Texas Republican Party's 1996 request to deny the Log Cabin Republicans a booth at the state convention was way out of proportion to its usual torpor. Gay activists in the state suspect foul play. And the fact that Bush presided over a judicial swing to the center needs to be seen in context—he inherited one of the most ardently pro-business courts in the country. But, in general, the governor's record is relatively distinguished and moderate—more in line, oddly enough, with the kind of justices Bill Clinton has appointed than the kind we might expect from Gore if he continues his ultraliberalism in the Oval Office. If your rough guideline in this post-Clinton election is "same policies, no blow jobs," then Bush fits the bill on the judicial front at least as well as Gore does.

The truth, of course, is that even when presidents do try to appoint justices with a rigid ideological agenda, they find it very difficult. Only a few judges are sufficiently dogmatic that you can confidently predict their vote. But, in an evenly divided Senate in the post-Bork era, that kind of dogmatism usually spells death in the Judiciary Committee. And if we know one thing about Bush's temperament, it's that he is reluctant to fight high-profile, battles that alienate him from Democrats *and* Republicans. The best guess is that he'd pick moderate conservatives who sail through committee hearings and swing either way once they don the black robes. These are exactly the kind of justices—David Souter, Anthony Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor—who give conservative imprimaturs to such landmark liberal rulings as *Roe* v. *Wade* and *Romer* v. *Evans*.

Scared to death? Not really. My own hunch, for what it's worth, is that if Bush wins, the judicial activists gnashing their teeth in a few years' time will be ideological conservatives, not dogmatic liberals. That's what happened in Texas. Why wouldn't it happen in Washington?

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Where Is Washington?

AS THE WEEKS of Palestinian wrath wear on, a terrifying truth is becoming increasingly clear: It took 24 hours of war-making to undo 23 years of peacemaking. What does this say about the quality of the peace that was made? It was supposed to be a peace between peoples; but we must now conclude that it was not a peace between peoples, it was a peace between diplomats. It does not appear to have put down roots in the communities. Quite the contrary. The situation has deteriorated into a communal conflict in the murderous manner of the 1920s and '30s, in which mobs lay waste to each other's religious shrines (Palestinians sacked Joseph's Tomb, and Israelis sacked a mosque in Tiberias, and Israeli Arabs sacked a synagogue in Shefaram), and individuals are cut down on the roads. These were supposed to be days of reconciliation, according to the irenic calendars of Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak; but instead they are days of irreconcilability, in which the peace of the hand-shakers looks shallow, and even mischievous.

For this reason, the responses of American officials to the conflict are disturbing. All they talk about is getting the peace process "back on track." They make these statements often and mechanically, as if it is themselves, even more than the Israelis and the Palestinians, they wish to reassure. They do not wish to pause, and consider the lessons of recent weeks, because they fear those lessons will discredit their diplomacy. Peacemaking is not only a policy for the officials of the Clinton administration; it is also a cognitive habit. Dennis Ross's description of reality is the only description of reality that they can recognize. But a pause is absolutely necessary. Peace cannot be made between the peoples until a sober appraisal is made of the actual relations between the peoples, the political, social, cultural, religious, psychological, and economic relations. Who, except the doves futilely and dogmatically flapping their wings along the Potomac, could imagine that those relations as they really exist can provide a basis for peace? Don't they watch "Nightline" in Washington?

But the inadequacy of the American response to the disorders in Israel and the territories goes beyond its wishfulness. The events in the Middle East have exposed a historical transformation in American policy in the Middle East, a change that the Oslo process kept hidden: Under cover of the great American peace, the United States went from being Israel's ally to being a broker, a facilitator, a neutral power that no longer wished to choose between its clients in the region. But all of a sudden its clients are divided against themselves, and there is war within the Pax Americana. A choice must be made. It is Clinton's, and Gore's, and Albright's, and Berger's, and Ross's nightmare; but it is here.

And what does the Clinton administration do? In Paris, Yasir Arafat walks out of a meeting with Madeleine Albright, and the secretary of state runs after him. The indignity! In New York, the United States refuses to veto an old-fashioned resolution of the U.N. Security Council condemning only Israel, and instead chooses to abstain. The American abstention was an act of cowardice and nothing else. It surely encouraged Palestinians and other Arabs who believe that the United States, like history, is at last on their side; and it is unlikely Richard Holbrooke's comment to reporters that the resolution was "lousy" took back the emboldening effect. The administration was worried that an American veto would endanger American installations around the world, and would also offend the petrocrats of Saudi Arabia—which is to say, the administration agreed to be blackmailed. (There was a time, and it was not long ago, when the American representative at the United Nations was not afraid to raise his lonely, dissenting hand on Israel's behalf. . . .)

The United States of America is on the fence. That is the plain truth. And the political season is making the American abdication worse. The Democrats must fear that the Republicans will draw attention to the great collapse of American policy in the Middle East, and so they will deny that any such collapse has occurred. Bill Clinton, who came into office a genuine friend of Israel, now seeks to behave impartially toward Israel, preferring a failing peace process to a consistent friend. To wishfulness and cowardice, then, we must add cynicism, in our assessment of the American role in this crisis. The picture is increasingly shameful. ■

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WHOPPER KINGS: We generally applaud the "rise" of negative campaigning in American politics: Attacks are usually more substantive and more honest than the blather candidates peddle about themselves. The deeply dishonest, not to mention unbelievably tedious, trend is toward candidates fêting themselves for not engaging in negative attacks—and attacking all the while. And last week it reached a crescendo. "I'm not going to say a single negative, personal thing about my opponents," Al Gore pledged back in August. "You will not hear that from me in this entire campaign." George W. Bush, likewise, declared in July: "We're going to herald what we stand for in a positive and personal way. I don't like this politics of personal destruction." OK. So what about Gore spokesman Mark Fabiani's October 8 reference to Bush as "bumbling and babbling"? The same day, Bush's communications director branded the vice president "a serial exaggerator." The following day, the Democratic National Committee, in a press release, added: "By November 7, Bush may need to travel with a simultaneous interpreter." The day after that, the Republican National Committee called Gore "the Whopper King." We can't wait to hear the Texas governor explain that "Whopper King," far from being a "personal, negative attack," was really an "informative, comparative discussion of the issues."

ESTATES' RIGHTS: The rules of contemporary political journalism dictate that when reporters encounter disputes over candidates' proposals—as opposed to over big issues like whether a student in Florida "has" to stand in class or merely "had" to stand—they half-heartedly recite both sides' views and throw up their hands. Take Gore's assertion that more than 40 percent of the benefit of Bush's tax-cut plan would go to the richest 1 percent of the population. After initially calling Gore's charge "fuzzy math" without explaining how it was fuzzy, the Bushies have now successfully muddied the waters by trotting out a statistic of their own: Just 21 percent, according to the Bush campaign, goes to the top 1 percent. The number comes from the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT), which, as news reports invariably point out, is bipartisan. Too bad they don't also point out that the JCT's number, at least in the way Bush uses it, is wrong. It's wrong because the JCT's analysis doesn't include Bush's plan to eliminate the estate tax. Why not? Because calculating precisely who pays the estate tax is tricky; so, rather than make a mistake, JCT ignores it and just focuses on Bush's income-tax cuts. But while economists can't pinpoint the exact incidence of the estate tax, they know it is overwhelmingly paid by America's richest 1 percent. After all, less than 2 percent of the people who inherit estates inherit enough to pay the estate tax. And the liberal economic group Citizens for Tax Justice, assuming that the top 1 percent pays almost all of the estate tax, found that 43 percent of Bush's tax-cut package goes to the top 1 percent. That's the source of Gore's "more than 40 percent" claim. Bush, though, has misleadingly portrayed the JCT analysis as though it applied to his entire tax plan. And reporters have treated this as an equally valid interpretation. "The Bush campaign objects that [Gore's] estimate includes the effect of repealing the estate tax," reported *U.S. News & World Report*, in the evenhanded style that has predominated. "If income taxes alone are considered, says the Bush camp, 21 percent of benefits go to the top 1 percent of filers." True enough. And if you consider only Bush's expansion of the child credit, then *none* of the benefits of his tax plan go to the top 1 percent! But, of course, estate-tax repeal *is* part of Bush's plan, so the question of whether or not to count it is not a matter of perspective. Why does the press keep acting as if it were?

WITH CO-CHAIRMEN LIKE THESE...: Last week, Joe Andrew, the DNC national chairman, formally launched the Democrats' newest assault on Bush's record as Texas governor. Reporters asked why, if things were so bad, Bush won reelection with 69 percent of the vote in 1998. And Andrew was ready with an answer. "Obviously," the chairman said, "he had an opponent who was not able even to get a message out." That opponent was former Texas land commissioner and Democratic stalwart Garry Mauro—the man who, as Gore's Texas campaign co-chairman, is ostensibly responsible for getting Gore's message out. No wonder the veep is doing so badly in the Lone Star State. To be fair, Andrew also said Mauro "had very few dollars on TV and was not able to draw these kinds of contrasts that we're drawing." True enough. And Mauro, reached by THE NEW REPUBLIC this week, has an explanation: "The DNC didn't give me any money for TV."

HE'S MOVED IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS: We were touched to learn from U2's Bono that, when he met with Jesse Helms last month, the steely senator "wept" while discussing the crushing debt of poor African nations. Although Helms's office won't confirm that tears were actually shed, the singer—who's been lending his celebrity to the debt-relief cause—was clearly charmed, and accounts of the wondrous scene soon appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The New Yorker*. Too bad one of the principal roadblocks to passage of the Clinton administration's $435 million debt-relief plan is the opposition of one Jesse Helms. The North Carolina senator, along with fellow congressional Republicans Phil Gramm and Dick Armey, is insisting that loan forgiveness for poor countries be tied to sweeping reforms of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But, unlike debt relief, those reforms enjoy no political consensus, and linking the two issues will kill the debt measure until next year—which is a long time when you're suffering in Africa. Gramm claims his reforms will prevent the benefits of debt relief from going to dictators. But the plan backed by the administration already makes relief conditional on new benefits for the needy. It also limits relief to deserving governments making serious efforts to improve their fiscal and social policies. Unfortunately, such nuances seem to have escaped the celebrity debt-relief spokesman. After praising Helms in a recent TV interview, Bono groused that it is not Republicans who are holding up

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the bill but "the bureaucrats that get in the way and the red tape." *Achtung*, baby! You've been had.

IT'S THE PANACHE, STUPID: "The Republicans are at [Washington's] 21 Federal [restaurant], we're at Your Mama's [in Little Rock].... No Red Sage here!"—James Carville, quoted in *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1992

"I have been called a 'stupid and pathetic country bumpkin,' ... compared to David Koresh, and blamed for a sixty-five-point drop in the stock market, but never have I been called anything so repugnant ... as a 'Washington Insider.' This is one shoe clerk who wants no part of your poker game."—Carville, quoted in *The Houston Chronicle*, May 9, 1993

"There's a good name-dropping value [at the new Sports Club/LA in Washington], 'cause you can say, 'When I was on the recumbent bicycle talking to Larry King....' Like the new Ritz-Carlton [in Washington], it kind of gives a certain panache to the neighborhood. It's always nice when you have some rich people move in."—Carville, quoted in *The Washington Post*, October 10, 2000

GERRY ADAMS COMETH: "It's so prescriptive, it's going to require numerous IRA agents ... to even try to figure out what he means."—George W. Bush on Al Gore's tax plan, October 10

TALMUDIC SCHOLARS WATCH CONT'D: "He has almost a pastoral quality to him.... If he were Roman Catholic, he'd be a great parish priest."—Rutgers political science professor Ross K. Baker, on Joe Lieberman, to *The New York Times*, September 30

PUT IT ON HIS TOMBSTONE: Miloranka Ivkovic, the wife of Milosevic crony Trivun Ivkovic, complained to *The Washington Post* this week that her husband was forced out of his prison warden's job after Milosevic's defeat. "He was a great functionary," she said. ■

VINT'S WEEK

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Rendell's D.C. misadventure.

Local Hero

By Bryan Curtis

At first glance, Ed Rendell looks serene. He is sprawled on a patio outside his office, feet propped up, neck arching back to take in the sun. But the silence is fleeting. In an instant, Rendell, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, is upright, ready to answer questions. Or bark at his aides. Or field calls from party operatives. Or do all three simultaneously. For the next 90 minutes, Rendell talks incessantly. Legend has it that when he was mayor of Philadelphia, Rendell would schedule four meetings concurrently, in adjoining rooms, so he could conduct them all at the same time.

Rendell's words come fast and unfiltered. He leaps from Bill Clinton ("a fascinating character study!") to his role in the Gore campaign ("I've never been an attack dog") to his demeanor ("Sure, I have a temper"). And then, as is his wont, Rendell says something he should not: "I basically take orders from twenty-seven-year-old guys in Nashville who have virtually no real-life experience. All they've done is been political consultants living in an artificial world, and basically their opinion counts more than mine."

With comments like that, it's not hard to see why. Indeed, Rendell's tenure as DNC chairman has been one long, off-the-cuff rant. The media love it (Chris Matthews of "Hardball" calls Rendell "a real mensch"). But Democrats aren't so smitten and are working hard to marginalize their party's titular head. "The trick," says one Democratic consultant, "is to keep him in a position where he can't do any harm."

It wasn't supposed to turn out this way. When Rendell came to Washington in fall 1999 after two remarkably successful terms as Philadelphia mayor—Al Gore actually dubbed him "America's mayor"—Democrats cheered. As James Carville said at the time, "If he can play in Philadelphia, he can play anywhere." But, in hindsight, Carville had it backward. Rendell's legendary mouth, which served him so well as Philadelphia mayor, has prevented him from playing anywhere else.

When Rendell became mayor of Philadelphia in 1992, he inherited a city creeping toward economic and social chaos. From 1990 to 1996, more than 105,000 residents fled, quite literally. His staff predicted the budget deficit would top $1 billion in five years. But Rendell pulled the city back from the brink. He balanced the budget, rebuilt the downtown, and—most importantly—boosted Philly's sagging morale by becoming its nonstop cheerleader. Having promised to "clean up" City Hall, Rendell, reporters in tow, got down on his hands and knees and cleaned one of the building's rest rooms. In return for a hot-dog company's $5,000 donation to the city's recreation department, Rendell wrestled the company's mascot, a pig.

At other times, however, Rendell's outsized personality wasn't so endearing. In 1994, Lisa DePaulo, then a writer for *Philadelphia* magazine, shadowed the mayor for 24 hours. She was floored when Rendell, in the presence of his lawyer, described, "in crude and alliterative terms, how he thinks I am in bed." Two months later, he put another female reporter in a headlock. (He later apologized, explaining that he was "just trying to get her to focus and listen to what I was saying.") But the incidents only added to Rendell's mystique. "It almost seemed like the more boorish, roguish, and fratlike he acted," says DePaulo, "the more Philadelphians embraced him." Sure enough, in 1995 Rendell won reelection with 77 percent of the vote.

Rendell could have been mayor for life, but the city charter allowed only two terms. So off he went to the DNC. In one sense, at least, his tenure there has been a success: Rendell has kept his party awash in funds. (In the first quarter of 2000, the DNC netted $26 million in contributions, $2 million more than its Republican counterpart.) Says Democratic consultant Hank Sheinkopf, "Ed is an amazing fund-raiser."

But in the public-image department—all-important in an election year—Rendell has been a disaster. Unlike his predecessor Chris Dodd—a slick, on-message pol whom Clinton relied on as a surrogate in 1996—Rendell frequently strays from the Gore campaign's script. Says one senior Gore official: "Most of the time when he gets briefed, he

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probably says, 'I don't need these things, because I already know what to say.'"

So, as Gore labors to show the softer, warmer side women voters supposedly demand, Rendell sounds like Rambo: "I want to kill 'em in suburban areas on gun control and choice," he told a reporter in August. At the Democratic convention, when a reporter from ABC sidled up to Rendell outside a DNC fund-raiser on Rodeo Drive and asked him how he could reconcile the event with the convention's populist tone, Rendell snapped, "Just shut up for a second," before explaining that Democrats support campaign finance reform. Last week, after the first presidential debate, Rendell offered a candid assessment of Gore's performance to *The New York Times*—perhaps overly candid: "Had Al Gore gone up there and convinced people that he was Bob Newhart, maybe he would have scored a knockout. But Al Gore's not a Bob Newhart. That's not going to happen."

Then there was Rendell's performance during Gore's veep search. First, the chairman angered the DNC's Hispanic Caucus—big backers of Bill Richardson—when, last October, he told *The Washington Post* that, aside from tapping Bill Bradley as a potential Gore running mate, "I don't know where else Al would find somebody who would really help." Then, this August, after Gore's shortlist emerged—which didn't include Bradley but did include Joe Lieberman—Rendell told reporters, "I don't think anyone can calculate the effect of having a Jew on the ticket. If Joe Lieberman were Episcopalian, it would be a slam-dunk." Two days later, after Lieberman had been selected, Rendell once again implied Lieberman might sink the ticket: "Because it's new, because it's groundbreaking, because it's a national ticket, you don't exactly know for sure. You can say, 'Well, all these Jewish senators get elected,' but it's not the presidency and it's not the vice presidency of the United States." After Gore officials complained, Rendell told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "I made a mistake, although everything I said was true."

NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE Gore campaign has labored to keep Rendell out of the spotlight. At the Democratic convention, Rendell was given a speaking slot on Tuesday at 5:15 p.m.—i.e., when no one would be watching. And, even then, Gore officials had to rein Rendell in, cutting about 40 percent of his speech—including one of his favorite lines, "Stupid is as stupid does," which, he explains, wasn't a slap at George W. Bush per se but part of a larger *Forrest Gump* motif. Rendell is philosophical about the incident: "Shit, I knew virtually no one would be watching, so what did I care?"

Indeed, Rendell, who some say took the DNC job to boost his visibility for a possible run for Pennsylvania governor in 2002, has become an increasingly marginal figure of a city, the Gore spin operation. While surrogates like North Carolina Senator John Edwards appear on the Sunday morning talk shows, Rendell has since the early summer been consigned to small-time shout-fests like Fox News's "Hannity and Colmes" and "The Edge with Paula Zahn." Sources say that even DNC National Chairman Joe Andrew, the little-known former head of the Indiana party, is considered a better spokesman for the campaign. "When you're a mayor of a city, a large city ... you're like an emperor," Rendell explains. "And I went from that culture to, again, some twenty-seven-year-old picking up the phone and saying, 'Don't do this, don't do that.'" Actually, these days the former emperor is lucky to be called at all. ■

The trouble with exhilaration.

Kostunica, Then

By LEON WIESELTIER

THE GREAT DAY finally came, and all I could think about was the joylessness of justice. The spectacle of the brave crowds in Belgrade was strangely unintoxicating. The fall of Slobodan Milosevic represented the defeat of evil, quite obviously; but evil fallen is not evil undone. Perhaps justice must be joyless, because it is preceded by injustice. Justice comes always with a shadow. If it is properly understood, the establishment of justice cannot be an intoxicating experience. As I regarded the images of the sacking of the dictator's parliament and the dictator's TV station, my dourness startled me. How could one not be happy, when Vojislav Kostunica was calling for "a nonviolent, wise, civilized, democratic revolution" and proceeding to lead precisely such an uprising? The uprising represented also the success of American foreign policy, the vindication of Operation Allied Force, the triumph of the only foreign policy in the Clinton years (the Kosovo policy, not the Bosnia policy) that was conceived and executed on unequivocally ethical grounds. All this was true. But it was not all that was true. There was also the knowledge that the road to the Serbian revolution had passed through Vukovar and Sarajevo and Srebrenica and Pristina. And with this knowledge, how could one be happy?

Worse, the uprising in Belgrade established justice incompletely. The limitations of Kostunica and his revolution are disturbing. He is an unembarrassed Serbian nationalist, who does not see or does not wish to see that the tribal sentiment of his people, their "national question," has been not the solution but the problem. He translated *The Federalist Papers* into Serbo-Croatian, but during the Bosnian war he was sympathetic to the Serb separatism of Radovan Karadzic, and during the buildup to the Kosovo war he was photographed brandishing an automatic rifle in the company of some Kosovar Serbs. (That is not exactly what Publius had in mind.) He has declared that he will not deliver the war criminal whom he has deposed to the tribunal in The Hague, whose legitimacy he has contested. He is a democrat who wants his country to become a member of the European Union, but he welcomes the machinations of the Russian foreign minister, whose government was singularly unmoved by the democratic ascendancy in Serbia.

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In all these ways Kostunica seems genuinely representative of his people, whose ethical energies are ominously circumscribed by ethnic energies. The press accounts of the election that Milosevic lost, and of the uprising that followed his refusal to abide by its results, describe a population that was angry about the consequences of the sanctions that the West had imposed upon Milosevic's country, the poverty and the pariahdom. They were also tired of Milosevic's abuses of state power, especially his authoritarian control of the media. What motivated their rebellion, in other words, was their outrage at all that Milosevic had done to them. What was missing from the hue and the cry (at least as it was reported in the Western press) was outrage at what Milosevic had done to others—to Croatians, to Bosnians, to Kosovars. It was not his mass rapes, mass expulsions, and mass murders that brought Milosevic down. What brought him down were the unhappy consequences for Serbia of his failure in his ugly adventures. And the notion that the opprobrium that was visited upon Milosevic's Serbia was in any way deserved—that it was the right result of Belgrade's criminal actions—seems not to have figured prominently in the thinking of the Serbian crowds. They revolted against their leader, but not against themselves.

Is it asking too much that a society revolt against itself? It is surely asking a lot. Yet it has happened before; and there are circumstances in which a new beginning requires nothing less. The weight of history is heavier for being unacknowledged. In this sense, President Clinton erred significantly when he remarked that "this is just as big a blow for freedom as we saw when the Berlin Wall was torn down, when Lech Walesa led the shipyard workers in Poland." This was precisely the wrong parallel. I do not doubt that there are many genuine democrats in Serbia; but the striking fact, the discouraging fact, about the Serbian opposition during the past decade is that it has not been characterized by the stringent and exalted kind of dissidence that was produced elsewhere in the orbit of communism, where figures arose who directed their criticism at the foundations of their own societies, and who expressed their criticism in ferociously universal terms. Kostunica is certainly not such a figure. He is not proposing such a fundamental examination. It has often been remarked that Milosevic's regime was communism surviving in the form of nationalism; but it is important to observe that in Serbia anti-communism, too, takes the form of nationalism. For this reason, it has been only partially an uprising of conscience. And for this reason, one's exhilaration at the denouement in Belgrade is a little spoiled.

But the spoiling of exhilaration may be the beginning of wisdom. We have been stirred enough. Perhaps the terrible drama of the Balkans, where concentration camps were established after they were never to be established again, recommends only a coldness toward history, a sobriety from which we can never recover. But there was a breathless quality to some of the reporting of this revolution that brought to mind some of the breathless reporting of the revolutions a decade ago. Wasn't Kostunica addressing the crowd in Belgrade like Havel addressing the crowd in Prague? Here was Timothy Garton Ash, Clio's man on the scene, assuring us in *The New York Times* that he knows Vojislav Kostunica and that "Vojislav Kostunica is a very serious man. Solid. Consistent. Knowledgeable and capable of sophisticated rational argument. Principled, too. But hardly a bundle of fun." And in *The Independent* of London: "One might as well be listening to Vàclav Havel in Wenceslas Square in Prague in 1989."

In his reporting on contemporary Europe during the last decade, Garton Ash has himself been rather a bundle of fun. I was reading his new book, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s*, on the same days I was watching the events in Belgrade, and suddenly it seemed useful in a cautionary way. For breathlessness is Garton Ash's method. "Writers work in different ways," he writes, "but I can sum up my own experience in a doggerel line: There is nothing to compare with being there." This extraordinary sentence, which flies in the face of most human knowledge, appears in a methodological introduction in which Garton Ash introduces his own genre, which he describes as "history of the present." (He takes the phrase from George Kennan's praise of his own work!) The introduction is a long expression of his anxiety that his writing may be nothing more than journalism. To promote it to the status of historiography, Garton Ash argues against the old view that distance is the friend of clarity, "that you understand events better if you are farther away from them." Not so, he contends. "If you stop to think about it, this is actually a very odd idea: that the person who wasn't there knows better than the person who was."

Depends what you mean by "better," I suppose. It is certainly the case that proximity breeds its own brands of error. There is also the glittering counterexample of Theodore

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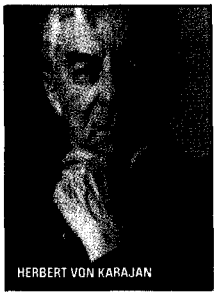

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Draper, who has scrupulously practiced what he calls "contemporary history" without ever "being there," but solely on the basis of official and unofficial documents, which he treats with the detachment of a medievalist. But the problem with Garton Ash is not his proximity to history. The value of good eyewitness accounts, of the sort that he sometimes provides, is plain. The problem with Garton Ash is his exhilaration about history. He practices a reverse John Reedism. He, too, believes that experience, and zeal, will vouch for truth. (Garton Ash, of course, is more truthful.) He, too, believes not only that he is a man of historiography, but also that he is a man of history. His book is larded with self-aggrandizing "chronologies" in which he enters his own movements into the annals of European history. At least the historical events are italicized—as in this entry, from 1997:

> *28 November. The Kosovo Liberation Army publicly announces its existence at the funeral of a Kosovar Albanian schoolteacher killed by Serb police.*
>
> 26–29 November. Prague. Time for a brief visit to Vàclav Havel, convalescing from serious illness at Masaryk's presidential country house of Làny. He has a glass of beer on the table....

Reading Garton Ash, and watching CNN from Belgrade, and remembering all the disillusionments of recent years, I conclude that a distance from history is required not only methodologically but also philosophically. Something smarter than exhilaration is needed, something more stoical, an engaged joylessness, a skepticism about historical action that does not rule it out. The Palestinian writer Emile Habibi nicely described this state of mind as "pessoptimism." Disillusionment, after all, is usually a mark of intelligence. Those are not history's winds at our backs, those are history's fumes. ■

Does Bush understand his Social Security plan?

Generation X

By JOHN GEANAKOPLOS

SOCIAL SECURITY IS the third rail of American politics. So why hasn't George W. Bush been harmed for proposing to transform it into a system of private accounts? Probably because his plan relies on simple and seemingly compelling logic. Today, retirees get a measly 2 percent rate of return (in the form of Social Security benefits) on the money they paid into the system (via payroll taxes). Since even ultrasafe bonds offer much better returns, Bush says, people would be better off investing their money themselves. In an era of dizzying stock market heights, this argument has the virtue of being timely. Unfortunately, it does not have the virtue of being true.

Under Social Security, the money you put into the system during your working years doesn't actually sit there collecting interest, waiting for you to claim your checks at age 65. Most of it goes back out as benefits for today's retirees. This is why Social Security is called a "pay-as-you-go" system: Today's workers pay for today's retirees; when today's workers retire tomorrow, tomorrow's workers will pay for their benefits; and so on.

It's an imperfect design. In an ideal world, each generation would pay for its own benefits. In other words, each worker would pay into the system, have his or her money accumulate interest (either as part of one giant trust fund or in individual accounts), and then take it back out upon retirement. Indeed, when FDR created Social Security in the 1930s, he envisaged a system more or less along those lines.

But there was a problem. It was the Great Depression; many elderly people literally faced starvation. They had made virtually no Social Security contributions, but Roosevelt felt they needed relief. So Congress decided to pay the destitute elderly of the '30s and early '40s with the contributions of contemporary workers, with the understanding that those workers would get their retirement benefits from the next generation of workers, and so on. As a result of this decision, the first generation of Social Security recipients got a windfall—receiving full benefits after paying little into the system.

Of course, once Congress started paying out full benefits, it couldn't stop. The elderly of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s hadn't paid enough into the system to cover full benefits, either, since their working lives began before 1937, the year the government started collecting Social Security payroll taxes. So each of these generations got a windfall, too. You might think this pattern finally ended in the '70s, when the first wave of people who began working after 1937—and thus paid Social Security taxes for their entire working lives—started to retire. But Congress raised benefits for retirees, so the transfer continued even longer. In today's dollars, the "windfall" to these generations totaled a staggering $10 trillion.

WAS IT A bad decision to start this cycle? Only if you think it would have been preferable to let those elderly people suffer or to force the workers in the '30s and beyond—who really didn't have the resources—to bear the cost of their parents' retirement all on their own. Consider a concrete example, similar to one I have written about with fellow economists Olivia Mitchell and Stephen Zeldes. Your father reaches retirement age, but he has no savings. Letting him starve isn't an appealing option, but neither is bearing the cost of his retirement all on your own—it's simply too much. (Assume, to borrow an example that reflects the real Social Security numbers, his retirement would soak up 12 percent of your lifetime earnings.) That leaves one other choice: You can spread the cost across the generations, promising to support your father in exchange

JOHN GEANAKOPLOS is James Tobin professor of economics and director of the Cowles Foundation at Yale University.

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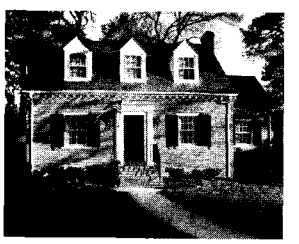

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for an implicit promise from your children to support you. That way your father gets what he needs to retire (12 percent of your lifetime earnings), while you and your children get what you need (12 percent of the lifetime earnings of successive generations). Everyone shares the cost of supporting the first father, but if anybody stops paying, it is his own father who is left holding the bag.

What does this have to do with Bush's Social Security plan? When Bush bemoans Social Security's "2 percent rate of return," he is making a relatively straightforward calculation, comparing the money today's workers will take out of the system upon retirement to the money they will have put in over their lifetimes (all adjusted for inflation). But this ignores the burden of paying for previous generations of retirees. To use our example, Bush is showing you how much money you take out of the system compared to how much you put in, then complaining about what a lousy return you got on your investment—all the while neglecting to mention that some of your money was spent sustaining the previous generations that got the windfalls.

If Bush made an honest comparison—that is, if he included the money paid out to previous generations as part of your benefits—then your rate of return would look much higher. After all, if previous generations profited by $10 trillion from Social Security, it is a mathematical certainty that future generations must lose $10 trillion. In a pay-as-you-go system, the contributions of one generation are the benefits of another generation, and one generation's loss is another generation's gain. This generation's loss shows up as low rates of return.

You can see this by returning to our example one more time. Remember, everybody in your family is getting retirement benefits equal to 12 percent of the lifetime earnings of his or her children. But this is not the best return on your investment: Had you salted the money away in government bonds, you would have garnered interest—let's say 4 percent. Instead, the "return" on your investment in this retirement system is merely the growth in wages from one generation to the next. Historically, wages have increased by a little less than 2 percent per annum, accounting for inflation and population growth. And so your rate of return is just 2 percent.

THERE ARE WAYS out of this cycle. We could, for example, simply shut down the system and let all workers start investing their money in private accounts. Their rates of return would shoot up, depending on how well they played the market. But, of course, that would saddle current middle-aged workers and retirees with the entire multigenerational transfer bill of $10 trillion. Their situation would be the reverse of the '30s generation's: They'd have spent a lifetime paying into the system but would get nothing out of it. Alternatively, the government could shut down the current system but promise to pay full benefits to these people until the new accounts have run for enough years to cover full benefits. But this doesn't get rid of the $10 trillion burden—it just shifts it to the government, which in turn would pass it on to workers through higher taxes. So if the rate of return on Social Security went up, it'd only be because people were losing money elsewhere. Take into account the money lost elsewhere, and the effective rate of return on Social Security would still be—you guessed it—2 percent.

A closer look at Bush's plan shows that he cannot do better for most Americans. His plan diverts the temporary surplus in the Social Security trust fund (right now, contributions exceed benefits, because so many baby-boomers are still working) and uses it to start private accounts that will accumulate interest. But the surplus is already earning interest; the trust fund invests its surplus in government bonds at market rates. So, in moving the funds to private accounts, Bush is not actually getting a better investment—he's just shifting it. Now, it's possible that people would invest their money in stocks, which tend to yield higher returns over the long run. But those higher returns come with higher risk. Account for risk, and the real rate of return is the same as before for any American who already owns stocks and bonds. (For those Americans who have no funds to invest in stocks outside of Social Security, private accounts might help by letting them diversify.)

More to the point, though, Bush doesn't do anything about the $10 trillion intergenerational debt. It's still there. How will it get paid? It's hard to be sure, since Bush has refused to provide the details of his plan, but we know the following: He says he won't cut benefits for current retirees and those about to retire, while future workers—those who retire 30 years from now—will have substantial investments. Most likely, then, the burden would fall on those in between: The trust fund, bereft of the surpluses (which Bush used to finance accounts), will be insolvent, and the people retiring ten or 15 years from now won't get their benefits. So, in the final analysis, Bush hasn't really improved the rate of return on Social Security at all. He's given some people more money, at the cost of giving others less. Nothing fuzzy about that math. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Right Now

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

ON THE NIGHT before Yom Kippur, a haunted Shimon Peres appeared on Israeli television and came as close as he could to confessing the sins of the Oslo peace process. Wide-eyed and shouting, he condemned the Palestinian desecration earlier that day of Joseph's Tomb in Nablus: "Now they say they want Rachel's Tomb. For what? To burn it, too?" Then the interviewer dared ask the question that Israeli journalists, who have largely functioned as cheerleaders for the Oslo process, almost never ask: Maybe the skeptics were right all along? Peres replied, "We had to try," tellingly slipping into the past tense.

Ehud Barak may delay the inevitable and insist that a negotiated end to the conflict is still possible. Like a commando intent on completing his mission at any cost, the

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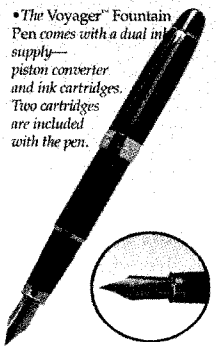

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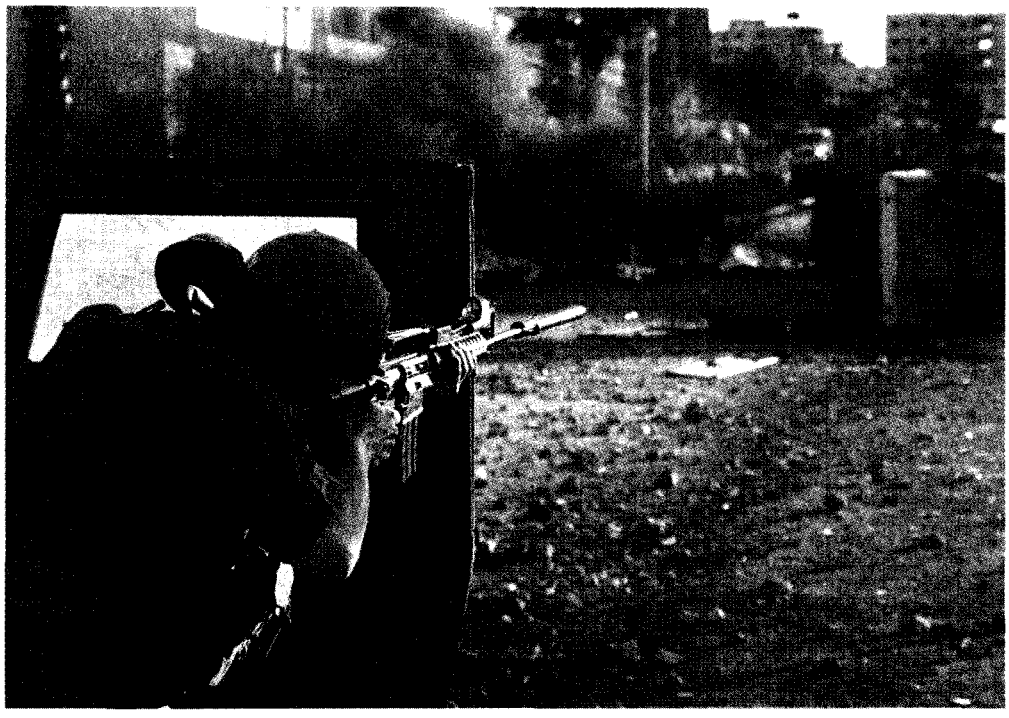
Israeli prime minister may even manage yet another interim agreement with Yasir Arafat. But the events of the last two weeks have destroyed Oslo's premise—that gradual Israeli concessions would ease Palestinian hatred, in turn easing Israeli fears of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. Even if Barak tries to stand by his Camp David offer of joint rule in Jerusalem, Arafat has made it impossible. The Israeli public, which still supports withdrawal from most of the territories, will almost certainly oppose sharing Jerusalem—let alone the Old City—with Arafat's regime. Nor are Israelis likely to accept the Palestinian chairman as guardian of the Temple Mount. The desecration of Joseph's Tomb—in the presence of Palestinian police and following an agreement with Palestinian officials peacefully to transfer authority over the site—reminds Israelis of the wholesale destruction of synagogues by the Jordanian authorities in Jerusalem's Old City before 1967. Israel's seven-year debate about whether Arafat is a legitimate peace partner is over, and the skeptics have won.



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

The result is a perhaps fatally demoralized Israeli peace camp. To be sure, the true believers still insist negotiations must go on. But they have lost their strongest argument, the promise of a comprehensive peace. The moral balance has shifted: Suddenly, the Israeli press is treating Likud Knesset members with respect, rather than as ludicrous anachronisms. Meanwhile, Arab Knesset member Ahmed Tibi, long a favorite of the Israeli media, is being denounced as an apologist for violence even by former admirers. "It turns out that Ahmed Tibi is the ... Ariel Sharon of the Arabs," writes left-wing columnist Yael Paz-Melamed in the newspaper *Ma'ariv*. "An extremist, who sees only a single truth and lacks even a drop of empathy for the other side.... The Israeli left is left to lick its wounds and consider where it went wrong and why."

Israeli liberals have believed since the Yom Kippur War that Israeli intransigence was at least partly responsible for Arab hostility. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, went the argument, had been ready for an interim deal, but Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's refusal to withdraw from the Suez Canal in 1971 left him no option but war. Yet now, perhaps for the first time since then, the mainstream left has begun to sense that the Arab world remains largely unreconciled to Israel's existence. "Yom Kippur 2000 has been bound with Yom Kippur 1973," writes Nachum Barnea, Israel's preeminent columnist and a veteran peace advocate, in the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*. "It seems that the circle of Arab enmity around the state hasn't been breached at all. To the sense of siege is added the realization that [our] partner isn't a partner, an understanding isn't an understanding, and every withdrawal only increases the appetite of the other side."

It is both just and fortuitous that the Israeli government now in power is left-wing. The left that imposed on Israel a deceptive peace process is now forced to manage its collapse—just as it was fitting that the first intifada, which destroyed the illusion of Greater Israel, happened on the watch of Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Imagine if Benjamin Netanyahu were now prime minister instead of Barak: Tel Aviv's Rabin Square would resound with anguish and outrage; some soldiers might even refuse to fight "Netanyahu's war," and the largely pro-Oslo general staff would be close to revolt.

Indeed, the world media missed one of the key stories of the last two weeks: the almost complete absence of domestic left-wing demonstrations against Israel's handling of the riots. Though the world press portrayed the violence as a replay of the intifada of the late '80s, most Israeli leftists understood the difference: This time, the Palestinians were facing not Shamir but a peace government that had offered them a compromise so generous that it appalled Leah Rabin. The Israeli left had waited decades for a prime minister who would offer near-total withdrawal from the territories, the uprooting of dozens of settlements, and the redivision of Jerusalem—only to see him branded a Nazi in the Arab world.

IRONICALLY, THOUGH, BARAK himself—the former military hero who in last year's election promised to pursue peace from a position of strength—seems less able to face the grim new realities than some leftist writers on Israel's op-ed pages. On Yom Kippur eve, after the burning of Joseph's Tomb and the kidnapping of three soldiers on the Lebanese border, Jewish Israel seemed poised for a national-unity government. As Barak gave

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Arafat a 48-hour ultimatum to end the violence and Acting Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami wondered aloud whether Israel had a credible peace partner, Jews across the spectrum agreed that our internal feuds had become untenable. Left-wing Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said he'd consider sitting with the "leper" Sharon; ultra-secularist Shinui leader Tommy Lapid said he would sit with his archenemy, the ultra-Orthodox party Shas.

It was a precious moment; but Barak let it pass, extending the 48-hour deadline seemingly indefinitely. Though Arafat, yielding to international pressure, apparently did order a reduction of violence, shooting against Israeli targets continues daily. And that, it seems, will be the pattern from now on: Violence—albeit at varying levels—will accompany the negotiating process for however long it bleeds on. In fact, Arafat has just released dozens of Hamas terrorists from Palestinian jails. And while Israeli security officials are divided over whether Arafat has explicitly given Hamas a green light to resume suicide bombings, they agree that Hamas is likely to interpret the prisoner release in precisely that way. In this environment, a suicide bombing would create such outrage in Israel against Arafat that Barak would be unable to resume negotiations.

Though Barak may try to defer it, a national-unity government must eventually emerge. Such a government would send a crucial signal of Israeli determination to the Arab world. Military commentators here warn that the appearance that Israel is losing its resolve—from the withdrawal from Lebanon last May to the flight from Joseph's Tomb last week—has brought the threat of war closer. Despite Barak's insistence after the Lebanon withdrawal that Israel would retaliate for any Hezbollah incursion by hitting Syrian targets, the kidnapping of its three soldiers went unanswered. In this case, restraint was justified: An attack would have jeopardized the lives of the hostages. But the restraint further eroded Israeli deterrence. And, in tandem with Barak's farcical 48-hour deadline, it reinforced the perception among Arabs that our threats are empty.

However essential, the formation of a unity government with the Likud, which would be tantamount to declaring the Oslo process over, is a grim prospect. Formally ending Oslo could hasten the next war. And that war may well involve both external assaults by Syria, Iraq, and Iran and internal sabotage—blocked roads, destroyed infrastructure—by Palestinian forces and even some Arab Israelis. It would be a combination of the 1948 war and the Gulf war: internal siege plus missiles.

In fact, "national-unity government" is a misnomer: It will be a government of Jewish unity only. Arab Israelis have never felt more alien. No development has frightened Israeli Jews more over the last two weeks than the uprising within their borders. Withdrawal from the territories, after all, was intended to save Israel from Balkanization; but with a radicalized Arab minority living among us, separation no longer solves the conflict. And, with the outbreak of retaliatory Jewish pogroms against Arabs throughout the country, the Arab uprising threatens to degenerate into civil war—and, in areas where synagogues and mosques have been burned, into holy war. Even before the uprising, many Israelis had begun to despair of forming a coherent society from the Jewish ethnic and ideological diversity that has been gathered here. Now, though, we are approaching anarchy. A session of the Knesset had to be postponed for fear that Arab and Jewish legislators would physically attack one another.

For Jews, the blocked highways and besieged villages throughout the Galilee and even in Jaffa, on the border of Tel Aviv, evoke Israel's 1948 struggle for survival. Jews now feel besieged on three fronts—Palestine, Lebanon, and internally, by our fellow Arab citizens. And, as we lose control both within the country and on its borders, the sense among us grows that our next war of survival may have already begun. ■

How the Democrats became hawks.

Trading Places

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

"I THOUGHT IT was very strange," recalls Andrei Cherny, the Democratic Party's platform director, describing the session in Cleveland, Ohio, last July where the platform committee drafted the party's official positions. "A Democratic platform committee that was so tilted toward defense—it says a lot about how far the party has come." Cherny, a self-described New Democrat, was delighted. But others at the meeting—representatives from Americans for Democratic Action and the Progressive Caucus, as well as veteran lefties like Tom Hayden and Gloria Allred—weren't nearly as pleased, particularly about the plank calling for a national missile defense.

Among the distraught was committee member Michael Ceurvorst, who protested that missile defense "is making very difficult our situation globally with regard to arms control." Another committee member, John Businger, complained that Al Gore and campaign manager Donna Brazile had sent him letters touting their positions on schools, the environment, and universal health care, but "they didn't mention this ... I don't think our platform has to say anything about it." In the end, though, committee moderates

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easily quashed the attempt to jettison the missile defense plank.

The episode, claims Cherny, "was a typical example of the shift in the party on national security. The old siren songs no longer have a place." And even some on the other side of the aisle agree. "The McGovern wing of the party is clearly in retreat," says Bill Kristol, the hawkish editor of *The Weekly Standard* and hardly a Democratic booster. "You can't ignore the massive fact that only twenty percent of the Democrats in the Senate voted for the Gulf war—and that twenty percent of that number are the Gore-Lieberman ticket."

They're right: In the Clinton era, McGovernism no longer drives Democratic foreign policy. But neither does anything else. Considering what went before, that's actually good news. Through sheer lack of conviction, Bill Clinton has brought the Democratic Party's foreign policy account back up to zero. The question for his successors is whether they can take the next step and resurrect a Democratic tradition of robust internationalism buried for more than 30 years. Given the hawkish records of Lieberman and, to a much lesser extent, Gore, there's some reason for hope. In fact, given the direction Republicans appear headed, the Democrats may be the only hope around.

The Democrats' transformation from the party of containment into the party of McGovern began, of course, with Vietnam. Rehearsing a critique of U.S. foreign policy that would be enshrined as party orthodoxy for the next two decades, the dovish 1972 Democratic presidential candidate, George McGovern, depicted the U.S. war in Vietnam as a "policy of mass murder," called for massive reductions in defense spending, and admonished America to "come home." The party would never recover. From Jimmy Carter's mockery of "the belief that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained" to David Bonior's support for the Sandinistas and Michael Dukakis's opposition to the bombing of Libya, the conviction that American power was irredeemably tainted became a leitmotiv of Democratic politics.

Conventional wisdom holds that when communism died, in the early '90s, so did Democratic isolationism. The Democrats didn't oppose intervention per se, the argument goes; they only opposed the cold war. If only it were that simple. In truth, what began as opposition to the war in Vietnam had by the end of the cold war hardened into reflexive opposition to the use of force. Libya, Iran, Iraq—the ideology of America's foe no longer mattered.

The Gulf war, fought more than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, elicited all the old arguments. Senator Robert Kerrey advised that "rather than threatening war ... we should tell Iraq and the world we believe the wholesale loss of American and Arab lives is too great a price to pay to liberate Kuwait," while even much-celebrated moderates like Senators Sam Nunn and Daniel Patrick Moynihan couldn't discern a compelling reason to support the use of force. A year later, Democratic senators like Ted Kennedy and Joseph Biden were once again in full cry, condemning a leaked Bush administration memo that explained how America could retain its primacy. California Senator Alan Cranston sneered that the memo's aim was to make the United States "the one, the only main honcho on the world block, the global Big Enchilada."

During the 1992 Democratic primaries, as well, all the candidates recited the familiar litany—all, that is, except one. Paul Tsongas lectured that Americans cannot "allow ourselves to continually become the policeman of the world." And Tom Harkin advised, "If you want to carry on spending your money overseas, then vote for George Herbert Walker Bush." But Bill Clinton sounded so hawkish that the Bush White House accused him of being "reckless." A group of prominent neoconservatives even took out an ad in *The New York Times* declaring that Clinton had "openly stated his opposition to the brutal and archaic communist dictatorship

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in Beijing . . . and resisted those . . . who propose reckless cuts in our national defense."

DURING HIS FIRST year in office, though, Clinton seemed to revert to party type. Having used prominent hawks for political cover during the 1992 campaign, Clinton dispensed with them as soon as he reached the White House. Instead, he filled key foreign policy slots with Carterites like Warren Christopher and Anthony Lake, initiated the very defense cuts the neocons had promised he would oppose, and burbled about how the United Nations could be relied on to accomplish the traditional aims of U.S. foreign policy.

Then came the fiasco in Somalia. Though the mission had begun under President Bush, the Clinton team billed it as the first test of a new doctrine, which pledged that the United States would act militarily mainly in concert with, and on behalf of, the "world community" (read: the United Nations). But the death of 18 U.S. soldiers on October 3, 1993, proved a political disaster for the new president. Clinton publicly blamed the United Nations and abandoned his brief flirtation with liberal orthodoxy.

Taking the lessons of Somalia to heart, the president returned to the only doctrine he ever really believed in: politics. In the years since, Clinton has largely drained foreign policy of its philosophical substance, much as he has done with American politics as a whole. Although the White House has characterized its approach to foreign affairs as "pragmatic Wilsonianism," if anything the Clintonites' true inclinations bear a closer resemblance to the "dollar diplomacy" policies of Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover—which, like Clinton's, were fundamentally extensions of domestic policy.

Conservatives, to be sure, still discern evidence of lingering McGovernism. In their telling, Clinton acts militarily only where America has no selfish interest—in places like Kosovo, where, Fareed Zakaria of *Foreign Affairs* instructs, "it is precisely the absence of (sordid) self-interest that assures liberals of the operation's virtue." But this isn't right. The Clinton administration's bombings of Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan hardly qualified as displays of heightened moral awareness. Neither, for that matter, did Clinton's eagerness to sit out the genocide in Rwanda and, for too long, an attempted genocide in Bosnia. Indeed, to credit this administration with coherence in any foreign policy enterprise apart from chasing free markets and campaigning for reelection is to glean evidence of ideology where there is none.

In those instances when the president has done the right thing, it's usually been because the price of inaction proved politically steeper than the alternative. The uncontested occupation of Haiti commenced only when the prospect of boatloads of Haitians washing up on Florida's beaches, combined with protests from the Congressional Black Caucus, backed Clinton into a corner. In a similar vein, the administration dithered shamefully for nearly three years while Bosnia burned and Clinton visited Holocaust memorials. The president's Balkan point man, current U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, recounts that Clinton decided to launch a sustained bombing campaign only after the Europeans began pressing the United States to honor a pledge to evacuate their hapless peacekeepers, a politically risky operation likely to produce substantial U.S. casualties—and which air strikes would, and did, make unnecessary.

Nor was the White House any more eager to launch Operation Desert Fox, the four-day air campaign waged in response to Saddam Hussein's refusal to comply with arms inspections in December 1998. After a disastrous town-hall meeting at which the White House conducted a de facto plebiscite on the advisability of military action against Iraq, a chastened Clinton team promptly asked U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to find a fig leaf that would permit the United States to back down, which it had already done on several occasions. When the administration finally did act, it did so in the least politically dangerous, and least militarily effective, way possible: launching a brief fusillade of missiles in the dead of night from a suitably safe remove.

IN KOSOVO, TO be fair, Clinton did the right thing for the right reasons. But, with an eye on the polls, he did it with the wrong tools. Minimizing American casualties by keeping attack aircraft above an altitude of 15,000 feet, subordinating the mission of U.S. soldiers on the ground to the imperative of "force protection," flinging missiles from afar—the war in Kosovo showed the extraordinary degree to which political calculations drive the Clinton administration's use of force.

Clinton's motives may be less than exalted, but if a president earned a ribbon each time he ordered U.S. forces into action, this one would be wearing a chestful. And this has had a profound effect on the Democratic Party. As with welfare reform and crime, explains Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, "with a Democrat in the White House, Democrats in Congress have learned to support an interventionist foreign policy." Under Republican pressure, the president has also abandoned his opposition to national missile defense and boosted military spending—and the congressional Democrats have gone along with that, too. As a result, the McGovernite contingent that once dominated the party's congressional wing is today the residue of a vanishing past. Aside from Paul Wellstone, Tom Harkin, John Conyers, and a few other congressmen frozen in amber, Clinton has triangulated the "peace Democrats" out of existence.

But if the Democrats are ever to do better than triangulation, they will need to recapture a sensibility far from Clinton's, a sensibility that decades of McGovernism never completely snuffed out. In the aftermath of McGovern's 1972 defeat, a group of traditional liberals close to Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson formed the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), which directly challenged the isolationism that had seized Democratic ranks. Unlike his party's dovish establishment, Jackson and his colleagues at the CDM insisted that America's self-interest and the interests of humanity were not inherently incompatible. On the contrary, they claimed that the world was a better place as a result of the vigorous application of American power.

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Accordingly, Jackson counseled a foreign policy that was at once robust, idealistic, and interventionist.

In the Democratic Party of the 1970s, however, this was anything but an easy sell. And, after Jackson's failed bid for the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination, the CDM's influence in the party slowly waned. Its frustrated members drifted right, many to the Reagan campaign, and Jackson himself died in 1983. True, the Democratic Leadership Council picked up where the CDM left off, championing an assertive foreign policy and the buildup of America's defense. But the DLC was less concerned with foreign policy than its predecessor and was not nearly as ideological. Consequently, by Reagan's second term the Jackson legacy had become the exclusive property of the Republican Party.

IT IS AN odd and extraordinary thing, then, that along with Arizona Senator John McCain, the current Democratic vice presidential candidate probably qualifies as the CDM's truest ideological heir. As Jackson biographer Robert G. Kaufman describes Joseph Lieberman, "His political perspective largely mirrors that of Henry Jackson: a liberal on domestic issues; an opponent of affirmative action; a staunch advocate of vigilant internationalism and a strong military." Echoing that appraisal, *Washington Post* columnist David Broder has described Lieberman as "an embodiment and an apostle of a Democratic philosophy that incorporates market-oriented thinking of the Reagan revolution and a muscular defense and foreign policy."

Lieberman's "conservative" views on foreign policy, as on domestic policy, we are told, derive from his religious commitment. The cliché contains a kernel of truth, but it hardly accounts for the Connecticut senator's political biography. A better explanation is that Lieberman loosely followed the trajectory of many rank-and-file Democrats and (mostly Jewish) intellectuals who, during the 1970s and 1980s, drifted to the right on a host of issues as they grew disenchanted with a party establishment moving steadily left. Lieberman, according to a prominent neoconservative, "is one of us."

The product of a conventionally liberal family of Adlai Stevenson Democrats, the young Lieberman worked in the civil rights movement, justified the rhetoric of Malcolm X as "the understandable response to a people in anguish," opposed the war in Vietnam, supported Robert Kennedy in 1968, and much else besides. Then Lieberman was, as the saying goes, mugged by reality.

"Joe got out of Yale [Law School]," says a Democratic activist who knew Lieberman in the '70s, "and realized that the whole liberal agenda was a mess. [His move right] was a package deal." Lieberman himself states in his book, *In Praise of Public Life*, that by appearing "to favor the rights of criminals over the rights of victims of crime" and by seeming "to be more concerned with 'peace' than with maintaining a necessary level of military strength," Democrats had moved too far left. While retaining his commitment to domestic spending and consumer protection, within the space of a few years Lieberman went from civil rights activist and antiwar liberal to proponent of the death penalty, opponent of affirmative action, and cold war hawk. "So often in Democratic politics," explains Ben Wattenberg, the former CDM chairman and a longtime friend of Lieberman's, "the public comes to correct views before the political class, and, on foreign policy and lot of other things, Joe did just that."

Lieberman now dubs himself "conservative on foreign policy." He ran to the right of Republican Lowell Weicker for the Senate in 1988, blasting him for having condemned Reagan's strike against Libya and for championing warmer relations with Fidel Castro, whom Lieberman characterized, correctly, as a Soviet puppet. But, like Scoop Jackson and unlike many contemporary conservatives, Lieberman believes in using military means to advance America's ideals, not just its economic interests. "America is more than a piece of real estate," he argued last year in backing the air campaign in Kosovo. "America is a series of moral principles that begin with the right to life and liberty that the Declaration says our Creator gave us."

Having, like Gore, earned the vituperation of party elders for voting to oust Saddam from Kuwait, Lieberman called on the Bush team to use force in Bosnia as early as 1992, cautioning that Milosevic may "have to look down the barrel of a gun before he stops his aggression." Nor did he temper his rhetoric when the Clintonites copied the Bush administration's inaction. And, unlike them, he has been an outspoken advocate of strengthening America's ties to the Iraqi opposition, insisting that we "toughen the stranglehold on Saddam and hasten his removal from power." He has also parted ways with the administration on policy toward Castro, whom he vilifies as "among the last adherents to the bankrupt philosophy of Communist authoritarianism." Lieberman concedes it will be a struggle "to reinvigorate the international aspects of the Jackson legacy in the Democratic Party." But, if elected, he would be the most hawkish Democrat to occupy the vice presidency since Hubert Humphrey. And, a Gore adviser assures, "Lieberman will have a big role in foreign policy. He'll be in the room with Gore." Ultimately, however, the shape of Democratic foreign policy rests with the somewhat less consistent hawk at the top of the ticket.

ON PAPER, AT LEAST, Gore's record resembles his running mate's. During the '80s, he voted for aid to the Contras, backed the use of force against Grenada and Libya, and supported the MX missile. "I think it is important to realize that we do have interests in the world that are important enough to defend, to stand up for," Gore declared during the 1988 Democratic primaries. "And we should not be so burned by the tragedy of Vietnam that we fail to recognize an interest that requires the assertion of force."

The vice president claims that his experience as an Army journalist in Vietnam—where he witnessed firsthand the desperate plight of the South Vietnamese—helped disabuse him of the reflexive anti-interventionism that infected so many of his peers. In fact, he has repeatedly admonished his fellow Democrats to "get over" the "Vietnam syndrome." When Gore was a senator from Tennessee, his hawkishness could be partly explained by the need to represent his state's fairly conservative constituents—a need brought indelibly

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home to him when his father's opposition to the war in Vietnam cost him his seat. Tellingly, of the ten Democratic senators who voted for war against Iraq, seven were Southerners (of the remainder, two were from Nevada and the other was Lieberman). Still, Gore's hawkishness wasn't simply a function of local politics. Of the ten pro-war senators, Gore was the only one contemplating higher office at the time, and, given the Democratic Party's position on the war, he stood to lose far more than to gain by voting for it. In the Clinton administration as well, he pushed the president to launch missile strikes against Saddam Hussein and to halt Serb depredations, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo—though here, too, there was no clear political benefit.

But Gore didn't always eschew the dovishness required to rise within the national Democratic Party of the Mondale-Dukakis era. Yes, he supported aid to the Contras. But what he voted for was humanitarian aid; on the more important question of military aid, he voted no. Gore was also an early supporter of the nuclear-freeze movement and voted repeatedly with his party leadership to cut defense spending, as well as against aid to El Salvador and to the anti-Communist guerrillas in Angola. In 1988, the dovish Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) examined Gore's record and said he voted to their liking 57 percent of the time. (By comparison, Gore's fellow Southern Democrat, Sam Nunn, received a rating of 32 percent.)

After a slow start in the 1988 presidential primary and with the hawkish Nunn having dropped out of contention, Gore opportunistically moved right in preparation for the Southern primaries, accusing his opponents of practicing "the politics of retreat, complacency, and doubt." The makeover prompted Representative Dick Gephardt to snap, "Lately, you've been sounding more like Al Haig than Al Gore." Gore biographer Bill Turque, too, believes that Gore, "by channeling Scoop Jackson," was being less than sincere. Even Gore's fabled Gulf war vote a few years later was preceded by months of public trimming. And it was accompanied by a speech excoriating President Bush for getting America into the mess in the first place (a speech, then-Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole claimed, for which Gore demanded a prime-time slot as a precondition for supporting military action).

But while Gore was an inconsistent hawk during the '80s, when it posed political dangers, in the '90s, with the risks diminished, he proved more reliable. On the stump, Gore has blasted George W. Bush for insufficient bellicosity, saying that "just as we fought and conquered totalitarianism during World War II—just as we fought and conquered communism during the cold war—we are defending the idea of freedom itself." Calling his foreign policy doctrine "forward engagement," he has proposed boosting defense expenditures over the next decade by more than $50 billion over the level the Texas governor recommends. Such positions recently prompted *Nation* columnist Eric Alterman to pay Gore a backhanded compliment: "A New Democrat through and through, Gore (together with Joe Lieberman) has been on the hawkish side of virtually every intra-Democratic argument. Like his gutless boss, but without the excuse of being a 'draft dodger,' he supports the showering of the military with mountains of unneeded funds."

As for Gore's counselors, his longtime foreign policy aide (and likely national security adviser in a Gore administration) Leon Fuerth is, if essentially a technocrat, by all accounts an able one. Gore's most likely secretary of state, Richard Holbrooke, was the Clinton team's most vocal hawk and one of maybe two hard-liners in the Carter administration. Add to the mix retired admiral and defense modernizer William Owens or Navy Secretary Richard Danzig at Defense, and it's possible a Gore administration may finally banish the Democrats' Vietnam hangover.

Possible, but not certain. Gore could pick as his secretary of state the dovish ex-Senator George Mitchell, who is being touted by an ardent anti-Holbrooke camp. Then there's Gore's "new security agenda" of environmental and social issues, which at best may be prematurely correct and at worst a rehash of Carter-era twaddle. Gore's China policy, too, promises to be as lousy as Clinton's. And, more generally, the "business first, democracy later" lobby wields nearly as much influence in Democratic circles these days as in Republican ones. On the other hand, the "Peace Democrats" who once pushed Gore to the left are, thanks to his boss, no longer a force in Democratic politics.

BUT THE SUREST reason for champions of an activist foreign policy to take a closer look at the Democratic ticket is, well, the GOP. Among the congressional Republicans, a toxic blend of libertarian zeal, isolationism, and Clinton hatred has yielded a critique of American foreign policy that recalls nothing so much as the old Democratic one. "An issue or crisis comes up," John McCain observed of the new generation of Republican congressmen, "and [their] reaction is almost Pavlovian: Don't send troops." Recently, the GOP's congressional wing has even revived the 1970s Democratic canard that not only have we been spending more than necessary on military interventions, but vital domestic programs are being bled dry as a result. True, congressional Republicans still speak of defending "vital interests." But, when it comes to identifying those interests, they can no longer seem to find any.

The Bush campaign, too, has placed misgivings about military intervention at the center of its foreign policy agenda. The Clinton administration, complains Bush foreign policy adviser Stephen Hadley, has "been too quick to reach out to the military instrument." And George W. Bush flatly admits he won't intervene to stop "genocide in nations outside our strategic interest." For all his invocations of Reagan, his "distinctly American internationalism" amounts to nothing more than a variation of old-world realpolitik and an echo of Gerald Ford.

The Democratic Party, sadly, hasn't been moving in the right direction as quickly as the GOP has been rushing in the wrong one. But the Clinton administration has at least cleared the deck. Gore and Lieberman may do more than that. And the hard truth, for those who believe in an America strong enough to champion decency around the world, is that, at this moment in American politics, they're pretty much the only game in town. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Leading Ladies

I WISH I owned the White House. What a fortune I'd make from film and TV people by leasing the right to duplicate rooms in the place for their productions. When I was a child and my parents suggested a film, I'd ask, "Is Charlie in it?" Today an equivalent question would be, "Who's the president this time?"

Well, this time it's Jeff Bridges—in **The Contender** (DreamWorks)—and he is slyly, smilingly comfortable in the part. His president is no world leader: he is a clever pol enjoying the biggest slice of pie any pol ever had. True, the story gives him no chance to be a statesman, but there is no trace of the statesman in him. He's just a poker sharpie whose idea of government is to guess the cards that his opponents are holding. The worst part of it is that not only is he the most interesting person in the picture, he is the most believable. (What hath Clinton wrought?)

The screenplay was written by the director, Rod Lurie, a West Point graduate who has been an army officer and a film critic. (*There's* a unique datum.) Lurie's one previous feature, *Deterrence*, was also about an American president but was set in a snowbound Western diner, not the White House. The change of venue has helped greatly, in flex and action, and this time, instead of the worn plot ploy of nuclear threat, Lurie has chosen an original topic. The vice-president has died before the film begins; the story is about the president's choice of a successor and the fight for congressional confirmation. Of course the subject echoes some recent comparable fights, especially since the nominee here is a woman.

Joan Allen plays the nominee, a senator. Allen warmed up for this role, in a sense, by playing the president's wife in *Nixon*, so at least she knew the floor plan of the White House. But, experienced though she is, Allen is miscast here. She is a competent actress, reliable but never incandescent. Here, in a starring role, she is meant to be sufficiently charismatic to sweep us along with her. She is always credible but never more than that. Stars may or may not be able to act, but they must have personality. Allen merely can act. (A cultural history lies under that "merely.")

The fight against the senator's nomination is headed by a congressman to whom Gary Oldman gives the right oily viciousness, reminiscent of many such reptiles that we know from TV. This congressman, who chairs the committee examining the nominee, moves from cordiality to thunder, especially when the inquiry arrives at Allen's support of abortion rights. But the real weapon with which he means to crush her is the discovery of a college gang-bang in which she participated decades ago.

Lurie keeps his film humming, powered to some extent by the bluster of the presidential advisers whom we have come to expect in these pictures, and, despite some padding, it's all engaging enough to make us wonder how it's going to end. This is where Lurie collapses, betraying his story and his theme. The senator's stand on the sex scandal has been that she refuses to discuss it: she maintains that her private life is private, particularly something so far in the past, and is irrelevant to her current qualifications. Then it turns out that her position, staunch and admirable, is flimsy. All I can disclose is that her courage has been misapplied.

If that weren't damage enough, Lurie also contrives a disclosure about Allen's chief rival that is ludicrous. And as if he wanted to show us that he could top those gimmicks with an even more hokey one, he finishes the picture with some bravura baloney. We are left hoping that the next occupant of the White House—the next film, that is, not the president alone—will fill it with more acceptable plotting. *The Contender* is just one more brave Movieland assault on serious subjects that ultimately sidles past them.

Girlfight (Screen Gems) is about another sort of female contender—a boxer. This struggle, much more modest in story and in production splash, is also much more successful.

First, another of the pleasant astonishments that have lately been coming along. For the third time in three weeks, here is a first feature that marks the arrival of true talent. The writer-director is Karyn Kusama, a young American whose picture, unlike Rod Lurie's, proceeds from its initial novelty to a realized existence.

Kusama had the usual hard time in finding the funds to make her picture, a problem that doesn't necessarily evanesce with réclame. She demonstrates yet again that, every time a good film appears, part of the director's achievement is her victory over the conditions of filmmaking. (In this instance, one of Kusama's beneficiaries was the writer-director-actor John Sayles, who also contributes an unbilled brief appearance as a high school teacher.) Kusama's struggle must have been harder than most because the picture's best qualities are in the way that it is made, not in a whiz-bang story that could be plunked on somebody's desk.

The girlfighter is Diana Guzman, a Latina Brooklyn high school student, who visits a local gym when her brother boxes there and who is fired up with intent to be a boxer herself. This is not in itself a new notion in the world these days; still, the film's first success is in making her ambition entirely believable. Her family situation, her social frictions, and her physique make her ambition an understandable attempt to break out of the limitations of her life: the gym people need to be convinced, but at last a trainer takes her on because she can pay his hourly rate. The script is a bit thin about this money: she lifts it from her father's stash at home. Doesn't he notice? He doesn't even find out for a while that she is boxing. (Also, there is never any mention of special padding for her breasts. Female fencers—all fencers, in fact—wear plastrons. Don't female boxers wear some sort of protective device?)

Diana meets and becomes involved with a young male boxer, and in the gym she is matched with him. This is surely the only boxing film in history in which, during a clinch, one fighter whispers "I love you" into the other's ear. Their love affair, like all of the film, is treated by Kusama with finesse. Diana, her boyfriend, her trainer, are so genuine that the basic situation, not unique but still somewhat bizarre, never troubles us.

One clear factor in Kusama's talent is her casting eye. She works well with her actors, but earlier than that, she chose them well. Michelle Rodriguez, as Diana, never falters, in presence or emotional drive: it is impossible to question her being. Santiago Douglas gives the boyfriend the right mixture of the free-and-easy with the knowledge that this girl means more to him than most. Jaime Tirelli is more complex than the usual

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sage, patient trainer. A special bow, too, to the composer Theodore Shapiro who, instead of leaning on pop songs or their equivalents, has written a true film score, *durchkomponiert* and very helpful.

Rocky is the facile but quite false point of comparison with *Girlfight*. This is not the saga of a climb to a pinnacle of success. It's the account of a lonely girl who finds a way to establish herself to herself, and has the courage to see it through—at least as far the story warrants. Kusama presents it with a confidence that she justifies completely. ■

America consumed by consumption.

Undialectical Materialism

By Alan Wolfe

I.

"At the end of the twentieth century," writes Gary Cross in his history of contemporary consumerism, "never had Americans taken critiques of consumer culture less seriously, though that culture may never have needed criticism more." There is much to be said for both halves of his proposition.

If Americans have long preferred roast beef to socialism, they have also been partial to Christianity, virgin forests, small-town fellowship, and family solidarity—all of which place limits on the reach of the market. There have been resources aplenty in the American tradition, even as late as the twentieth century, to sustain a criticism of consumption. As Cross reminds us, Prohibition called upon those resources, which was one reason why business interests, including those which had little to do with the manufacture and the distribution of alcohol, worried about the implications of regulating drink. Hard as it is now to imagine, credit was once considered a sign of shame in America, and department stores were reluctant to extend it to their customers. As conservative a man as Herbert Hoover was disturbed about excessive advertising on radio: "If a speech by the President," he remarked in 1924, "is to be as the meat in a sandwich of two patent medicine advertisements, there will be no radio left." By the 1950s, Americans were buying unprecedented numbers of small houses and large cars, but they were also buying books by such social critics as Vance Packard, Rachel Carson, and John Kenneth Galbraith that warned against their proclivity to consume.

An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America
by Gary Cross
(Columbia University Press, 256 pp., $27.50)

Irrational Exuberance
by Robert J. Shiller
(Princeton University Press, 296 pp., $27.95)

The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies
by Robert E. Lane
(Yale University Press, 465 pp., $35)

Do Americans Shop Too Much?
by Juliet Schor
(Beacon Press, 493 pp., $35)

Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism
by James Twitchell
(Columbia University Press, 310 pp., $14.95)

One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy
by Thomas Frank
(Doubleday, 353 pp., $26)

It takes a historian to provide an appreciation of how far Americans have wandered from the days when consumerism was slightly suspect, and Gary Cross is superbly up to the task. His short but punchy book argues that the arrival of trophy homes, SUVs, lotteries, and IPOs represents the triumph of an "ism." In a way that needlessly downplays the real differences between democracy and totalitarianism, Cross argues that the ultimate winner in the ideological wars of the twentieth century was consumerism. Still, if a way of life is defined as a set of organizing principles that constitute the meaning of the good life, and establish obligations between both strangers and friends, and provide the meaning of right and wrong, then consumerism has vanquished all its religious and political competitors, not least because of the indifference to belief that it inculcates. Liberal democracy still defines America, but liberty is coming more and more to mean that everything is, and ought to be, for sale; and democracy is being turned into the notion that whatever people want the most must be the best for them.

One would think that a revolution of such magnitude would at least give rise to sustained commentary and criticism, yet until recently very little had appeared. Cross offers an explanation of why. Neither the left nor the right could hold power in America unless it tailored its political views to accommodate a deeply held passion on the part of Americans to accumulate material possessions. Bowdlerized Keynesianism allowed liberals to downplay their redistributive inclinations in favor of the attractive proposition that government, to avoid a return to the Great Depression, had a duty to spend. It was not long before the need for public consumption was expanded to include private spending. Spurred on by the proposition that a rising tide lifts all boats, John F. Kennedy sent Galbraith off to India and turned his attention to winning business confidence. Liberals remained tied to obtaining improvements for labor and to new social policies, but these would be financed out of the tax revenues brought about through economic growth. Without consumerism, there would have been no postwar liberalism.

So attracted was the left to consumerism that even the rebellion against liberalism led by the counter-culture of the 1960s eventually succumbed to its allures. For all of Charles Reich's talk of a new level of consciousness, adherents to the counterculture, Cross writes, "became rebels through consumption." If anything, hippies and druggies "improved on the

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consumerism of the 1950s rather than really challenging it." The consequence of their search for new experience was the opening of new markets. Manufacturers and advertisers heard their pleas for personal authenticity and responded by tailoring goods to meet them. When the psychedelic impulse had played itself out, the urge to satisfy the self was all that remained.

And conservatism became as dependent on mass consumerism as liberalism. Robert Taft's dour Republicanism, suspicious of cosmopolitanism and devoted to budget-balancing propriety, could never survive the movement of its Midwestern base to Phoenix and Los Angeles. Quick to step in and meet the need for a new form of conservatism was a curious mixture of evangelical Protestantism and regulation-free capitalism, the one denouncing the forces of uncontrolled hedonism launched by the other. Had Ronald Reagan moved to satisfy the former, America might well have experienced a religious revival whose impact would have included the reminder that wealth alone does not open the gates of heaven; but Reagan, like Kennedy before him, wanted himself and his party to be liked, and it is always more popular to satisfy desires than to limit them.

Turning his administration over to such all-but-forgotten enthusiasts for the market as Anne Gorsuch, Mark Fowler, and James Miller—who in turn deregulated the environment, the airwaves, and federal trade policy—Reagan took consumerism to new heights. Cross is rightly astonished that a movement calling itself conservative would be so willing to invade the home, the churches, and the schools—all of which once taught a culture of restraint. By the time Reaganism finished working its way through American society, such quaint notions as uninterrupted family meals, commerce-free Sundays, unspoiled places, and unindebted self-reliance had almost completely disappeared.

CONSUMPTION, THE ESSENCE of the profane, has become sacred. It is not that putative critics bow down mute before it, for such critics can still be heard. But on what ground can they stand? The socialism that was once the alternative to the capitalist market had no chance of surviving once those who lived under its strictures caught a glimpse of what the market could do. Conservative Christianity was fueled by its hostility to modernity, presumably including modern capitalism, but it never allowed that hostility to stand in the way of its fund-raising prowess. Americans would rather be unsafe at any speed than safe at speeds they cannot choose. Attack the American love affair with goods, and you attack the American way of life.

Still, it is only a matter of time before Americans begin to develop second thoughts about the direction their society has taken over the past twenty years or so. The question of whether those Americans will be prepared to listen to a new round of complaints about consumerism is quite open. Should the critics make their case in the attenuated manner of Galbraith—barely concealing their disdain for those who prefer to shop at Wal-Mart than to watch public television—they will, in this age of triumphant consumerism, be as immediately obsolete as the Corvair. The tradition of skepticism toward the market brought to life by Gary Cross can only be revived if it finds a language as innovative as the capitalism that it seeks to condemn.

II.

FUELING THE RECENT American love affair with the market has been the spectacular rise in the one dealing in stocks. Since stocks represent ownership in companies, and since companies usually own valuable assets, we naturally think that to own stock is to own something real. People seem to believe that those dollar amounts listed on their retirement and investment accounts are a form of consumption like any other, for whether you buy a car or stock in a car company, you have purchased something that enables you to enjoy the good life.

But what if the value in the stock market does not reflect any equivalent valuation in the real world? Robert J. Shiller, a Yale economist, offers a plausible scenario that this is the case. In the last decade of the twentieth century, stocks rose in value far out of proportion to the economic growth registered in the economy. In an effort to explain why, Shiller points to the convergence of a wide range of non-economic factors, all of which worked to push prices up. The Internet not only offered the prospect of a radically new industry, it also changed the way Americans thought about stocks in general. Baby boomers reached a stage in their career wherein they needed outlets for their incomes after they finished paying the college expenses of their children. The Japanese threat withered away. Capitalism recaptured the moral highground from socialism. Discount brokers urged people to make their own financial decisions. Gambling lost is association with sin.

All of these developments possessed self-fulfilling qualities. "As prices continue to rise," Shiller writes, "the level of exuberance is enhanced by the price rise itself." As a result, Americans began to lose touch with the fact that trading in any commodity, particularly stocks, is a risky business. Suppose the market goes down three percent on any given day, Shiller asked a group of wealthy Americans: what would happen the very next day? In 1989, thirty-five percent of them said it would increase; in 1999, fifty-six percent of those polled thought an increase likely. Exaggerated investor confidence creates what Shiller calls a "naturally occurring Ponzi scheme."

Unlike the shenanigans associated with confidence men, natural Ponzi schemes require no criminal mastermind. All it takes for a speculative bubble to expand is a willingness on the part of large numbers of people to believe that the price they pay for a stock now, no matter how seemingly high, is actually low compared to what it will be in the near future. Since there is no real foundation for this belief, Shiller identifies it as "irrational." At some point, the mutual delusion that fuels naturally occurring Ponzi schemes loses its credibility, and when that happens, again without any criminal intent, stocks will rapidly fall in price, inevitably harming the most gullible.

TO UNDERSTAND THE irrational exuberance behind today's stock market, one has to turn from economics to psychology. Human beings need to anchor their beliefs in something, Shiller argues. When we lay out money for a car, we justify our decision in terms of the amount of time and trouble that the possession of the car saves us, as well as the remaining book value of the car should we need to trade it in for cash. Since they have lost touch with any underlying economic valuation, the anchors justifying high stock prices, unlike those involved in high car prices, are sunk in turbulent waters. We say that the high price that we just paid for a stock is fine because similar stocks also have high prices. Or we take confidence from bits and pieces of folk wisdom: diversification protects you against ups and downs; markets are by definition efficient; price does not matter because, like the millionaire next door, one should hold onto the stock for many years. The theories or the explanations offered to explain high stock prices are really just rationalizations, and none more so than the chimera that, with the emergence of the Internet, America has somehow created a new economy. But it is not the new economy that explains the rise in stock prices; it is the rise in stock prices that tempts us to believe that we have a new economy. About this, Shiller is depressingly convincing.

In turning to psychology, Shiller recognizes that, however irrational the exuberance of the stock market may be, its

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appeal, even to those who once resisted the lures of what is little more than speculative gambling, transcends the cut-and-dried logic of utilitarian calculation. If there is a problem with Shiller's analysis, it is that the psychologists on whom he tends to rely remain within an economic paradigm broadly defined. The phenomenon of over-confidence provides an example. As experimental psychologists study over-confidence, they find that a belief that the market will continue to go up, while not rational in economic terms, may be rational in psychological terms: people may conclude that if they like a stock, others will like it, too, and they thus gain a certain amount of security by joining the herd.

Following these psychologists, Shiller calls this "magical thinking." But true magical thinking has little to do with rationality in either the economic or the psychological sense. Shiller might have pondered a bit more the role that dreams and fantasies play in offering people a sense that, if they do not join in a speculative frenzy, they will miss out on a near-ecstatic experience enjoyed by others. "The market is high," Shiller concludes, "because of the combined effect of indifferent thinking by millions of people, very few of whom feel the need to perform careful research on the long-term investment value of the aggregate stock market, and who are motivated substantially by their own emotions, random attentions, and perceptions of conventional wisdom." He is right, but he does not draw out the full implications of how broad-based is the desire to fulfill one's fantasies through the market.

So long as trading in stocks was undertaken by relatively few people for the benefit of relatively few people, limits existed on how far crowd psychology could push stock prices up. Yet the historic American love affair with consumption could not stop with consumer goods; once Americans got used to the idea of buying things, it was only a matter of time before they started to buy ownership in the companies that made them. Rising stock prices have made more Americans wealthier than ever before. At the same time they implicate more Americans than ever before in the risks of market exuberance. Crowd psychology matters more because the crowd has gotten so much bigger.

That the benefits of stock ownership are no longer reserved to the privileged few but have trickled down to the middle class is surely cause for celebration. How ironic, then, that the very economic security tantalizingly held out by this development requires a psychological security in the stock market that neither history nor economics can justify. The next crash to come will be the first crash after the democratization of the market. When it comes, we will have a hard time blaming it all on the machinations of elites, though some will try. But it will be impossible to avoid the conclusion that the pain we will suffer after the disaster happens will have a direct link with the pleasure that we sought before it happened. What the market giveth, economically and psychologically, the market is quite capable of taking away.

IT MUST BE a sign of increasing discomfort with markets in general that Shiller is not the only Yale professor turning to psychology to shed light on the irrational aspects of consumption. Robert E. Lane wants to know why rapid economic growth has not brought along an increase in human happiness. Put two lines on a chart, one measuring GNP between 1940 and 1990 and the other plotting the percentage of people who respond "very" to the question of how happy they are, and you will observe that the two lines move in exact opposite directions. Markets are supposed to satisfy human desires. But if we take seriously "subjective well-being"—people's own account of their satisfaction with life—they seem to do the exact opposite.

To explain this paradox, Lane has written *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*, a book rich in data that explores why capitalism and liberal democracy, both of which justify themselves on the grounds that they produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number, leave so many dissatisfactions in their wake. Like Shiller, Lane finds economic theories wanting, because their reasoning tends to be circular: people with more money can satisfy more preferences, and since the satisfaction of a preference counts as happiness, it follows that the more money people have, the happier they are. The problem is that the more money we have, the more likely we are to compare ourselves to those who have even more. Moreover, there is a diminishing marginal utility associated with materialism; the more goods that we can buy, the less the satisfaction of each good that we do buy. Something in the very dynamics of the way markets work, Lane believes, prevents them from delivering on the satisfaction that they promise.

By encouraging people to put a monetary value on everything, markets, in Lane's account, undermine the ties of solidarity associated with friendship and family—ties that, if they are to endure through thick and thin, must be non-economic in nature. Hence survey data show that companionship tends to suffer as income levels tend to rise. The market provides cognitive overload, giving us more choices than we need; and the loss of companionship results in emotional underload, taking away even the most minimal satisfactions for sociability we crave. The evidence, Lane concludes, is "ambiguous," but it leans toward the conclusion that "markets themselves are an inherent cause of social isolation."

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY, LIKE capitalism, is premised on the pursuit of happiness, and it too, Lane believes, has not delivered on its promises. Although he insists that he is not a nostalgist longing for worlds we have lost, Lane's data leave the reader with the strong impression that something equivalent to Shiller's naturally operating Ponzi scheme influences the politics of liberal democracy. We are all encouraged to believe that prosperity in economics and individualism in politics ought to make us happier, and we presume that everyone else around us must be happier; and this makes us more vulnerable to the melancholy and the dismay that will occur when we all wake up to discover that we really have been quite dissatisfied all along. Such a cycle of confidence followed by disillusion may well explain the periodic outbursts of populist anger throughout America these days. How can a society whose wealth has risen so dramatically be so vulnerable to political demagogues who insist that Armageddon is nigh?

Lane's book is at one and the same time scrupulously careful and wildly ambitious. He does not want to make a generalization unless he can find empirical support for it, and since empirical data rarely all point in the same way, he is bound by his responsibilities as a social scientist to avoid over-interpretation. Yet Lane's general thesis is as ambitious as they come—on a par, in sheer audacity, with the grand old speculation about *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. For if it is true that wealth breeds unhappiness, we face nothing less than the prospect of rethinking just about everything that we have taught about economics and politics.

Fortunately for those of a less ambitious bent, Lane finally does not prove his claims. The increase in unhappiness that he seeks to explain is something of a non-event. As Lane himself concedes, the overwhelming majority of Americans consider themselves quite happy. From 1972 to 1994, moreover, the decline in those who consider themselves "very happy" was roughly five percent: significant enough, but hardly earth-shattering. One could imagine any number of explanations for this modest drop-off. It could be that women and African-Americans, having gained greater degrees of equality during this period, began to view remaining

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inequalities as more unfair. It could be that in an increasingly exhibitionistic and therapeutic culture, unhappiness that once would have been stifled is now expressible. There is, in short, the possibility that subjective unhappiness, in modest amounts, is produced by the very success of capitalism and liberal democracy. Give people voice, and they will kvetch.

THE MODEST RISE in unhappiness during these years is also an American phenomenon: in Europe, the percentage of those who were satisfied with their lives increased by four percent between 1981 and 1990, almost as large a percentage as the American decrease. If he had been more faithful to what his data showed, Lane would have avoided any explanations dealing with such abstractions as "the market," "democracy," or "modernity"—since Europeans enjoy, or do not enjoy, all three—and would have concentrated instead on specific aspects of the American experience. Yet Lane, who seems to have read everything on the subject that he could find, mentions, but surprisingly fails to focus on, the phenomenon of "American exceptionalism." Anyone as attuned to psychological explanations as Lane should recognize that psychology's insights are not universal truths of the human condition. They are cultural products of a particular time and a particular place. Keeping up with the Joneses means comparing yourself to the actual people nearby, not to the abstract others far away.

Even if we reduce the problem of unhappiness in what Lane grandiloquently calls "market democracies" to the problem of a slight increase in unhappiness in one particular country, we are still left with an awkward question: are those who tell survey researchers of their greater unhappiness willing to do something about it? There is nothing preventing people, should they conclude that their lives would be richer with more friends and fewer goods, to stop buying the one and to start acquiring the other. Yet people rarely do so. The literature reviewed by Lane suggests that, when faced with a conflict between money and happiness, people would rather have the money. The truth, as Lane himself puts it, is that "many people ... derive genuine satisfaction from their standards of living, their income, and their material possessions or wealth."

Given this popular support for materialism, Lane asks whether people are "the best judges of their own well-being." His answer, once all the qualifications are discounted, is that they are not. For all his reliance on social science data, Lane has aspirations toward social criticism; but in that role he is, alas, unpersuasive, for he cannot avoid the trap that has bedeviled critics of consumerism since Marx. Certain that a more richly authentic world is possible, he finds himself unable to accept the world in which people actually live.

III.

THE ECONOMIST Juliet Schor has written two books that give new meaning to the concept of a joyless economy. In *The Overworked America* (1991), she argued that Americans were stretched to the limit because they spent too much time trying to make money. In *The Overspent America* (1998), she enhanced the misery index by claiming that we were also too obsessed with spending the money we obsess about making. The source of our victimization is what she calls "upscale emulation": the reference groups against whom we compare ourselves are increasingly out of reach. It is no longer the neighbor down the street whose lifestyle sets the standard, but the world-class athlete or the Hollywood celebrity featured in glossy magazines and on television.

Schor offers an article-length treatment of her criticism of consumption in *Do Americans Shop Too Much?*, which is preceded by an introduction from Ralph Nader and followed by commentary from a disparate group of critics. The question mark in the title is superfluous. When it comes to consumption, Schor has emerged as our leading public scold. Her indictment of consumer culture may have its roots in Marxism, but, as Craig J. Thompson points out in his contribution to the book, it bears more resemblance to the Puritan fear that worldly goods are incompatible with the piety that makes for an authentic soul.

Distracted by the prospect of buying the good life through the products offered to us, Schor writes, we make more money only to spend more money. The poor among us are seduced by easily available credit at usurious rates. Middle-class Americans, wanting to send their children to the best schools, work long hours and then have to spend enormous amounts on commodities and services necessitated by their absence from home. We no longer save; and because we do not save, we worry all the time. Fearful to protect what we have, we support tax cuts and conservative policies that leave us without public goods such as day care or a national health insurance system, which might relieve some of the pressure. In *The Other American*, Michael Harrington argued that the presence of poverty constituted an indictment of the American way of life. Juliet Schor comes to the same conclusion about the presence of wealth.

Schor has little patience for any psychological explanations of the attractions of consumerism. "Americans did not suddenly become greedy," she writes. Instead, "structural changes" in the economy and the political system constrained the available choices. Trapped by rising inequality, and by what Schor calls "heightened penalties for failing in the labor market," Americans adopted consumerism defensively. Buying things, she strongly suggests, is not what people really want to do; but if you build highways and not bike paths, people will drive cars and not ride bikes. The notion that people might actually appreciate labor-saving devices, or that they night actually enjoy attractive frivolities, is foreign to Schor's pinched sensibility.

SCHOR THUS BRINGS back to life the tradition of social criticism associated with Galbraith—and in so doing, she also brings back to life Galbraith's disdain for the tastes of most of those who live in America. Convinced that people's perceptions of their own needs are false, Schor advocates a politics of consumption, a movement that would organize Americans toward the goal of spending less on their own goods and more on the goods they share in common. "Why not stand for consumption that is democratic, egalitarian, and available to all?," Schor writes. "How about making 'access,' rather than exclusivity, cool, by exposing the industries such as fashion, home decor, or tourism, which are pushing the upscaling of desire?"

Asked what the goal of the labor movement should be, Samuel Gompers once replied: "More." If that program eventually failed to make America labor-friendly, it is hard to imagine that "less" will have better results. Schor seems aware of the difficulties. She confesses that for many years she shared the left's commitment to the principle that the way to redistribute wealth was to get more of it in the hands of those who have less of it. And if Schor is right that one of the causes of "upscale emulation" is the fact that women entered the workplace, where they were exposed to wider horizons than could be found in the neighborhood, then a politics of consumption is as much an attack on the women's movement as on the labor movement. No wonder that Schor's critics in *Do Americans Shop Too Much?* are so skeptical of a politics of consumption. It would deprive people of whatever empowerment consumer goods offer, and it would also strip from them the few gains that their modern political movements have won for them.

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Schor's examinations of the way Americans work and buy do have one advantage over earlier attacks on consumption. Unlike the counter-culture of the 1960s, and indeed unlike the labor movement, they do not blend the bashing of capitalism with a furtive longing for pleasure, for the enjoyment of all that capitalism has to offer. Honest to the point of pain, Schor's anti-capitalism is the genuine thing: if we are to be true to our principles, we ought to tie ourselves to the mast of resistance no matter how seductive the allure. The trouble is that Schor's honesty exposes the flaws in her program. Consumerism's critics from the left have sought two major goals. One is the political goal of equality: consumerism is unjust because when goods are plentiful, some get more of them than others. The other is the aesthetic goal of simplicity: consumption is bad because it distorts people's needs and spoils their environment. Both goals are important to seek. When they are combined, as they are in Schor's books, any equality that we might achieve becomes unattractive, enabling those hostile to equality to offer pleasure as their alternative.

WHY NOT, THEN, just enjoy the cornucopia? It is not an unreasonable question, and it has been asked, with joyful exuberance, by James Twitchell in a series of books, most recently in *Lead Us Into Temptation*. Not for Twitchell any dour complaints about materialism. If anything, he argues, we are not materialistic enough. "We currently live in a culture in which almost anyone can have almost anything"; and, if Twitchell had his way, those modifying "almosts" will soon be gone. "Okay, okay," Twitchell addresses Juliet Schor and like-minded critics by name, "money can't buy happiness, but with it you stand a better chance than with penury." Twitchell finds most academics, unduly influenced by the perverse high culture tastes of the Frankfurt School, contemptuously patronizing of the people with whom they share their country. He writes not to reveal to people the true nature of their presumably false needs, but to warn them against the killjoys that are secretly jealous of the fact that so many Americans seem to be enjoying themselves without reading Proust and listening to Beethoven's late quartets.

Once freed from the necessity of lecturing people for their bad taste, Twitchell treats the things that people buy—and the places in which they buy them—as cultural artifacts replete with meaning for how they lead their lives. Advertising, for example, is not just about pushing unwanted goods into the hands of distracted consumers. Magical thinking—in the sense of a belief in miracles—is, in Twitchell's view, at the heart of advertising, as it is of religion, which suggests to him that it is through advertising that Americans experience classic tales of sin and redemption. The media in which advertising appears offer not so much programming as object lessons in "how branded objects are dovetailed together to form a coherent pattern of selfhood."

As Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein recognized, packaging is art and art is packaging. When people go to the supermarket, they are in effect museum-hopping, passing before one representation of their world to another. Collecting consumer goods is no different, in Twitchell's account, than the way Renaissance dynasties collected art: they searched for brand names, and so do we. When we drape our houses in furniture and our bodies in clothing, we demonstrate to the world not our conformity with the taste of others, but the distinctly individualized presentations of the self chosen by us to serve our purposes.

CAPITALISM HAS A way of undermining the arguments made on its behalf, and no sooner did Twitchell begin to publish his encomia to the cultural meaning of shopping than along came the Internet. Once the kinks are worked out—for the technologically advanced, they already have been worked out—the Web will allow people to buy things in truly a no-frills fashion, which means not only at the cheapest price, but also without such superfluous phenomena as salesmen, trips to the mall, and the off-chance of running into people they know. What will it be: the market as social spectacle or the market as ruthless efficiency?

"Don't bet on it," Twitchell advises those who, under the spell of the Internet, would presume to sell goods without the cultural meanings that go with them. If Twitchell is right, the good news is that, in choosing the best display over the best price, we will sacrifice a bit economically to enjoy the benefits of the grand carnival. It is a sign of how far we have traveled down the road to commercial culture that we somehow want Twitchell to be right. The true nightmare of contemporary capitalism is not that it is a system that deluges us with goods, but that it is a system that reduces the purchase of those goods to heartless calculation.

Critics of consumerism do not want Twitchell to be right; they share with capitalism's apologists the sense that the only value that commodities possess is monetary. If we begin to admit that consumption has its pleasures, they fear, we will quickly find ourselves arguing that, since America has taken consumption to new heights, all must indeed be for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Twitchell offers no resistance against such a conclusion. "To some degree," he concludes, "the triumph of consumerism is the triumph of the popular will. You may not like what is manufactured, advertised, packaged, branded, and broadcast, but it is far closer to what most people want most of the time than at any other period of modern history."

With these words, Twitchell becomes as sterile in his satisfaction with consumer culture as the critics are with their discontents. If our only choices are to celebrate consumption for what Twitchell calls its "liberating role" or to condemn it for its illusion of freedom, then America's long debate over consumerism will have come to an end. But surely there must be more to the story than this. Critics of consumer culture have to accept with Twitchell that "there are no false needs"—or at least not very many of them—before going on to attack capitalism for its distortions. A little more of Twitchell's *joie de vivre* is required, not only to make the reading more interesting, but also to make the analysis more credible.

IV.

IF A MORE vibrant criticism of consumerism is ever to be forthcoming, Thomas Frank is the most likely to provide it. Although he was trained as an academic, Frank showed at least some of capitalism's entrepreneurial spirit when he founded a new magazine, *The Baffler*, that quickly developed an underground reputation as spunkier than the more predictable leftist criticism of the market associated with weekly opinion magazines. His new book, *One Market Under God*, is far and away the best of the recent spate of books critical of consumerism.

Frank argues that, with respect to capitalism, very little has changed, but with respect to the ideology through which capitalism justifies itself to the world, everything has changed. Wherever and whenever it appears, capitalism wants the same things: high profits, weak labor unions, extended markets, and a world safe for making money. No talk of a "new economy" will change any of that. All that is new in the new economy is some dazzling technology that may or (more realistically) may not deliver on its promises. "What the term describes," Frank writes in *Communist Manifesto*-like style, "is not some novel state of human affairs but the final accomplishment of the longstanding agenda of the nation's richest classes."

The rest, and best, of Frank's book is not about how the economy works, but about how it sells itself as a cultural product.

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Since capitalism benefits the rich and impoverishes (at least relatively) the poor, it has always had something of a public relations problem in modern liberal democracies. If captains of industry and their political allies spoke honestly about their plans, which invariably benefit themselves at the expense of everyone else, they would not get many votes. And so they seek ways of selling the benefits of a system that works to their advantage. They used to do this, following Adam Smith, by arguing that capitalism was the only economic system capable of promoting human freedom. The problem with this approach was its "tough luck" attitude toward those who lacked the material goods to enjoy their freedom. Read Hayek, Friedman, or early George Gilder, and you do not come away with anything at all ennobling. Capitalism's wonders were technological, materialistic, utilitarian; they did not speak to any deep human craving for the good society.

ALL THIS HAS changed in the past two decades, Frank argues, and no one is more emblematic of the change than Gilder. The frankly elitist theorist of *Wealth and Poverty* has emerged as the guru of a new class war. For those who have not been following Gilder's success on the lecture circuit, this war is not between rich and poor, it is between the once rich and the future rich. Old-style capitalism, the kind that we associated with monopolistic manufacturing firms that employ large numbers of manual workers who belong to unions, are the enemy. New technology companies, with their entrepreneurial instincts, long working hours, egalitarian lifestyles, and hip irreverence, are the good guys.

His eyes fixed on the future, Gilder, in Frank's account, was among the first right-wing conservatives to give up on the culture war. In ways that echo David Brooks's *Bobos in Paradise*, Frank recognizes that, for Gilder's dream of a new economy to come into being, alliances would have to be made with alumni of the counter-culture, not with the stuck-in-the-past dinosaurs of the Christian right. The energy necessary to create new technology companies came from some of society's least respectable segments, "immigrants and outcasts, street toughs and science wonks, nerds and boffins, the bearded and the beer-bellied, the tacky and uptight, and sometimes weird, the born again and born yesterday, with Adam's apples bobbing, psyches throbbing, and acne galore," in Gilder's irreplaceable words.

By finding a new bourgeoisie among the *lumpenproletariat*, Gilder stumbled on the secret of how capitalism could make itself popular in a democratic society. Once upon a time, capitalists were elitist and protest movements were populist. Why not reverse the imagery, and call the new business ventures populist and the resistance from labor unions—and leftists like Juliet Schor—elitist? It was, as Frank tells the story, a brilliant stroke. But it also got a great lucky break. When the stock market began to rise, fueled by these same high technology companies celebrated by Gilder, the idea of market populism caught fire. Don't listen to stuffy brokers who barely know your name, discount brokerage firms advertised. Trust your own instincts. Become your own Wall Street manager. Day trade. The stock market became the people's market. Far more than Robert Shiller, Thomas Frank recognizes the power of fantasy that propelled the market to new heights. For the first time in human history, the average person could not only hope to obtain a fortune, he could also manage it through his own insight and pluck.

It was not long before market populism turned against capitalism itself, or at least against that form of capitalism that insisted on obedience, conformity, and corporate loyalty. Management gurus came forward to proclaim the irrelevance of management. Magazines such as *Fast Company* attacked the stuffiness of the conventional corporation more radically than leftist social critics, promoting a version of free-agent mobility in which the individual and his own needs came first. In perhaps the greatest public relations success story of the era, corporate downsizing, which threw untold numbers of Americans out of work, was hailed as a great advance in human potential, making it possible for those same Americans to find their inner-selves.

AMERICAN CAPITALISM, IN a word, went post-modern. Just when English professors began to wonder whether they had taken Derrida too far, advertising companies began to run ads attacking advertising. You do not want brand loyalty for the same reason that you do not want corporate loyalty. New Age advertising industries presented themselves to sell the idea that, in a populistic democracy ruled by consumer choice, potential customers need to be empowered. As it turns out, postmodern marketing was also developed by a French intellectual, the advertising executive Jean-Marie Dru, who urged companies, in the spirit of '68, to identify their products with movements for social and ecological justice.

One of the most suggestive sections of Frank's book describes a meeting of Dru-inspired advertising activists—that is the only appropriate description—enthusiastic about the revolutionary transformation that they were effecting in public consciousness. Comparing the advertisers to the leftist meetings that he regularly attends, Frank cannot help but note the differences. Words such as "revolution" came up in the former, but not in the latter. "A generalized spirit of exhaustion tender to hover over the proceedings," he writes of the leftists. They have seen the future, and it is not them.

Frank tells his story well, and this is important; the first step in effective social criticism is being interesting. Yet Frank's sparkling prose and satirical bent is not accompanied by a corresponding breakthrough in political understanding. Indeed, his entire analysis of market populism presupposes that the appeal of markets to ordinary people cannot be compared to the real populism of angry farmers and militant workers back at the end of the nineteenth century. Since market populism is not true, it must be false—and before long, we find ourselves back on familiar leftist grounds. People are somehow deluded when they believe that a more dynamic economy gives them more choices.

Frank's analysis is carried out at the level of what elites think. His book focuses on management gurus and corporate planners, not on the people on behalf of whom Frank is presumably writing. And this is its biggest flaw. Market populism may drive the apologists for what Frank calls "extreme capitalism," but it does not drive the actual economy. It is true that large numbers of Americans, distrustful of authority, would rather make investment decisions on their own than pay the once hefty fees of rather lazy investment brokers. And they will react with disdain, as well they should, against companies that conspire with each other to keep prices high. Still, Americans have not come to accept, as Gilder would have them do, that a new stage in the evolution of humanity has been ushered in with the development of the microchip. They merely do not want to be left out of the good deals that they see all around them.

V.

CONSUMPTION IS ONE of those categories of human experience that demands Aristotelian moderation. Ban it, and the result will be a society impoverished by a paucity of the symbolic imagination—or, even worse, one that drives the symbolic underground, distorting its creative capacities into the illicit and the uncontrollable. The ascetic impulse is rarely a healthy impulse. If we want, as Robert E. Lane is right to insist that we

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ought to want, a society that establishes a priority for human happiness, we are better off trying to emulate a Catholic appreciation for finery than a Puritan preference for frugality.

Yet no society can allow its members to pursue their taste for goods to the point of excess, or look with indifference as some are allowed to satisfy their indulgences while others are not, and consider itself either a decent society or a just society. The desire to own a home of one's own is so powerful that a society would be foolish to crush it in the name of what Michael Walzer has called "simple equality," but there is no particular reason why a society need respond to someone's quest for a sixteen-bathroom mansion in the Hamptons with an ocean view. Excess consumption distorts the human imagination as thoroughly as enforced poverty.

By encouraging some to believe that there can never be legitimate limits on their wants, immoderate consumption encourages illusions of omnipotence. In asking others to accept less so that some can acquire more, it perpetuates resentment and it sustains badges of inferiority. By rewarding luck—and beyond a certain point, excess wealth is always a consequence of luck—it undermines bourgeois respect for hard work and the benefits of personal integrity. Ultimately, excess consumption destroys the very richness of the imagination that consumption can provide, for it reduces all sacred objects to a price, and blurs any lines between inherent value and perceived value, and places the creative capacity of the human race into the hands of those with the means to restrict access to them.

IT DOES NOT take a seer to recognize that Americans will eventually look back on these times as a period of excess. The evidence will consist not just in the trophy homes of Microsoft millionaires, or the Hummers sitting in parking spaces that cost more than apartments. Tackiness is nothing new. The corrosive effects of compulsive consumption will be found, rather, in the selling off of collective assets: state-run lotteries that give government sanction to a relaxation of a long-established heritage against gambling; efforts by universities to transform intellectual curiosity into marketable products; decisions by public television stations to raise money with the efforts of self-help gurus; the opening up of public parks and natural resources to corporate naming opportunities and marketing ventures; and the placing of corporate products and logos into the performances and the displays of both popular culture and elite culture.

Those are the excesses that provide the critics of consumption an opening to make their case. Yet that case is unlikely to be persuasive if it comes from leftists who, frustrated by power of the market to shape people's fantasies and to respond to their desires, adopt an equally unrelenting opposition to the way that the good life has come to be defined by most Americans. Nor will it come from conservatives so wedded to the companies that finance their political campaigns that they cannot place effective limits on corporate rapaciousness, which is finally the least conservative force in American society. It will have to come instead from those who are capable of reassuring Americans that there is nothing wrong with their instinct to want goods capable of improving and ornamenting their lives, yet who also can respond to their sense that, in offering those goods, capitalism cannot be allowed to trample on their privacy, or to treat them with contempt, or to stand between them and their God, or to destroy their families, or violate their sense of justice.

If it takes revolutionary rhetoric to advertise and to sell goods, then the next round of the criticism of consumption, if it is to be truly radical, will paradoxically have to speak in the language of tradition. Americans saw glimpses of a revolution in the 1960s and turned away from them. The same will no doubt prove true of the revolution that is now being promoted by the prophets of globalization and scorched-earth competition. An aggressively dynamic capitalism that emerges from the nothing-to-lose freaks and misfits celebrated by George Gilder is bound to upset those trying to live according to the dictates of 1950s conventional morality. To the knowing sophisticates of SoHo and Silicon Valley, their commitments to corporate loyalty will be naïve, and their adherence to family values will be obsolete, and their belief in God will limit their opportunities for quick killings; but it is people such as them, whose instincts for moderation stand in sharp contrast to Yuppie consumers' and their demographic heirs', who offer the best chance of standing in the way of capitalism's latest juggernaut. ■

Coming Home

By SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER

Confronting History: A Memoir by George Mosse

(University of Wisconsin Press, 224 pp., $27.95)

GEORGE MOSSE'S wonderful (and alas, posthumously published) autobiography is the story of several lives and of several worlds. All of them begin in Berlin, in 1918.

If there ever existed a Jewish aristocracy in Imperial Germany and then in Weimar Germany, Mosse's family was the epitome of it. George, the youngest of three siblings, was born into an almost mythical world for a German Jew. His grandfather Rudolf had established the family's publishing and newspaper empire in the German capital; and it grew during the second generation, albeit more shakily. Mosse's memoir tells of an everyday life of great luxury, of mansions and estates. Before he was ten, he had a car and a driver of his own, and a series of governesses, and his own living room and bedroom in Berlin and at the family's country estate.

Rudolf Mosse had come to Berlin from Posen to work in publishing. Like his father Markus, Rudolf was a German patriot committed to "liberalism and individualism as integral parts of national identity." Newspaper advertising was in its infancy at the time, but Mosse foresaw its importance, and it was not long before he launched his own advertising agency. He also understood the central role that Berlin would play in the newly united Reich, and in 1871 he founded the *Berliner Tageblatt*, one of the leading liberal newspapers in Germany. Fortune soon came, on a very large scale.

The conventional wisdom—and it is an old wisdom—is that influence in the media brings influence in politics. Not only had the Mosses (and a few other Jewish families) built media empires, but

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Jews also played a central role in major German papers and magazines during the first two decades of the twentieth century as editors, reporters, commentators, columnists, satirists, and so on. Mosse's father subscribed to the old wisdom, at least for a short time. In February 1933, ten days after Hitler acceded to power, he wrote to his sister that the sales of "our newspapers" were rising. The political commotion was good for business; and he was convinced that the impact of the newspapers on public opinion would soon be felt, would soon bring Hitler down.

Within a few months, however, the Mosse empire collapsed, like a sand castle at the edge of the sea. The Nazis attempted to provide a legal façade to the takeover of the firm; but the truth is that the Mosses were compelled (as George Mosse writes) "at gunpoint" to turn over their assets to a phony foundation for assistance to war veterans. Unfortunately, the rumor spread that the family had made a deal with the new regime, or had fled the country to evade their taxes. Hans Mosse, George's father, came back to Berlin in April 1933, summoned by Goering himself. What they discussed is unknown. Whatever it was, he was escorted back to the border by Rudolf Diels, the chief of the Prussian secret state police (the future Gestapo).

Young Mosse was an unruly child, and five years before the political collapse finally occurred he was shipped off to one of the most elite—and one of the strictest—boarding schools in Germany. He was ten years old when he entered Hermannsberg, the junior annex of the prestigious Salem school in southern Germany, near Lake Constance. The director, Fritz Hahn, was a Jew; but the atmosphere at Salem was thoroughly nationalistic, and sometimes anti-Semitic. The educational thrust of the institution was "character building" according to a Teutonic ideal of manliness.

Even more than his patrician childhood, his years spent at Salem left an indelible stamp on Mosse's personality. Jewish schoolmates were being bullied and he felt deep shame for not intervening. It was at this school, he writes, that the Jewish stereotype could be internalized by a young Jew—but it was also there that his lifelong concern with Jewish matters was born. "I did not have to wait for the Third Reich to become conscious of being a Jew," Mosse recalls, "and to see here the beginning of what later on would be a constant involvement with Jewish concerns. The fact that I witnessed the bullying and was too cowardly to come forward and aid my fellow Jew haunted me at the time and deepened [my] inferiority complex....Conditions throughout my boarding school life made it only too easy to internalize the Jewish stereotype." Many former Salem students joined the SS.

A few weeks after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany, most of Mosse's family left the country forever. George departed, too, and rather dramatically. He boarded the ferry to the Swiss side of Lake Constance just in the nick of time—a few minutes before his passport could have been "legally" taken away, at midnight, on March 31, 1933. George Mosse had become an exile—not a destitute one to be sure, but an exile nonetheless. "I guess that leaving Germany was one of the chief defining elements of my long life, which would never be the same again."

George Mosse at the University of Wisconsin, 1961

His *Wanderjahr* began at a Swiss boarding school, and continued at Bootham, a Quaker institution in England. It is at this point in his memoir that, in an admirably candid statement, Mosse reveals what he calls the "two basic facts" about his personality. "Though, much later, in the United States, I came to joyful terms with my Jewishness, more than two decades would pass before I could half way acknowledge my homosexuality. The differences and similarities between the two in my life were clear: I could not really hide my Jewishness—it had determined my fate—but I did not have to parade it in a society which discriminated against Jews. As to my homosexuality, had I revealed it at this point, not only would I have exposed myself to persecution, but I could never have aspired to a respectable position in society or in any profession—quite apart from the reaction of my family."

When he left Bootham for Emmanuel College at Cambridge, Mosse decided that history was his vocation, notwithstanding the disparaging comments of the master of his college ("you people become journalists, not historians"), and notwithstanding that his choice was determined also by his own lack of interest in the sciences. A little earlier, while still at Bootham, Mosse was awakened to political militancy by the Spanish Civil War. In the mid-1930s, he became—and remained—a partisan of the Left. In 1936, this meant anti-fascist activism, and Mosse turned into an ardent promoter of the Spanish Republican cause. In this connection, however, distinctions must be made. Mosse was brought closer to Marxist thinking, but he did not adopt a materialist conception of history. He became a socialist "attracted to the model of social democracy, believing in the utopia of a society which would somehow put an end to the present establishment and the economic monopoly on which it was based, while at the same time preserving liberal ideas of freedom and parliamentary government."

When World War II broke out, Mosse was in New York, on a visit. When he embarked on his trip, he was convinced that he would soon be back in Europe and would ultimately "settle down as an Englishman." But now he settled in the New World for good. Mosse's initiation to the United States, first at Haverford College in Philadelphia, and then as a doctoral student in the department of history at Harvard, is masterfully rendered, often by means of humorous anecdotes. Throughout the book, indeed, the reader discovers an attractive intertwining of kindness and irony, an amused look at the "human comedy" that is more effective for being narrated in an often self-deprecating tone. (Thus Mosse relates that he passed his doctoral exams by the skin of his teeth because a member of the examining committee, vaguely aware that the candidate's name was related to printing, insisted on examining him about the history of that craft, about which Mosse knew nothing.)

In 1944, before he completed his dissertation on the struggle between king

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and parliament in early-seventeenth-century England, Mosse was offered his first teaching position, at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He accepted. "The taxi took me to a hotel on the main street of the town. As I looked up and down the street, the row of houses seemed to begin nowhere and to taper off into nowhere, a speck in what I thought of as the great steppe ... I was unprepared to face such unlimited spaces. I felt lost and indeed began to cry, perhaps out of fright or out of despair that my academic journey seemed to have ended in another exile, this time perhaps from civilization as I had known it."

Yet it was in the American Midwest, first encountered with such despair, that Mosse entered the decisive period of his life, first at Iowa State, and then, from 1956 on, at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He was to accept other teaching positions over the years, but he never left Madison. The chapter describing the years in Madison is entitled "Finally Home." It was there that he became one of the eminent historians of our time, a charismatic teacher to thousands of eager students, an unabashed activist of the liberal left and an active promoter of university reform.

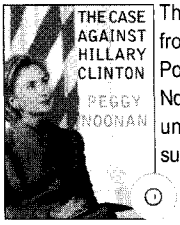
During his early years in Iowa and then in Madison, Mosse became an accomplished historian of early modern Europe. In 1950, his dissertation, *The Structure of Sovereignty in England*, was published. It was followed in 1953 by *The Reformation*, a short textbook, and in 1957 by *The Holy Pretence*, a study of the borderline between truth and falsehood among the Puritans. Soon afterward, in 1961, another textbook, a very successful one, called *The Culture of Western Europe*, appeared.

Yet this was still Mosse before Mosse. Inevitably, for personal and intellectual reasons, he shifted his attention to the study of modern history. Fascism and Nazism became the main themes of his work for many years, and suddenly his life and his books instantly connected. "My preoccupation with the tension between insiders and outsiders within society," he writes, "is obviously related to my homosexuality ... The nature of outsiderdom, which has been a constant theme of my work, also related to my identity as a Jew." For scholars of the terrible, complicated history of Nazism, the publication in 1965 of Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology*, was an eye-opener. It suddenly became a book that serious students in the field had to read. For the first time, the *Völkish* origins of Nazism were traced back through the nineteenth century to some of the most widely read products of German popular culture.

And yet, Mosse was right to believe that his first really innovative work was *The Nationalization of the Masses*, published a decade later. It was indeed this book that put his "own stamp on the analysis of cultural history"—or, more precisely, on the cultural history of modern mass political movements, mainly radical nationalism, fascism, and Nazism. *The Nationalization of the Masses* is a study of the sacralization of German politics throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reaching its climax in the the Third Reich. Discarding the traditional history of political thought, Mosse analyzed Hitler's manipulation of symbols and the mobilizing power of political religion. He started the book, in 1972, when he was teaching at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and living in the house of Jacob Talmon, the prominent historian of "totalitarian democracy"; and in the spirit of Talmon's groundbreaking study of the paradoxes of European political culture in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Mosse pointedly stresses the role of Rousseau in the creation of political religion, as he "moved from believing that 'the people' could govern themselves through town meetings to urging that the government of Poland invent public ceremonies and festivals in order to imbue the people with allegiance to the nation."

But Mosse's indispensable contributions to the study of fascism and Nazism were not his only contributions to modern historiography, or even his most significant contributions. Even more innovative, perhaps, was the link that he established, in his later writing, between nationalism, sexuality, and "respectability." This was genuinely original work. In 1985, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, appeared, and it marked a historiographical breakthrough. Modern nationalism, in Mosse's innovative account, was in its very essence the preserver of respectability, and so it needed "discernable and visible foes" for its own self-definition; and so it was that the "outsiders," the Jew or the homosexual, the quintessential Others, became a necessary part of the new politics.

The novelty of the link between nationalism and sexuality was striking. In retrospect, one regrets that Mosse did not delve even deeper and reach one of the darkest layers of his subject: beyond the intense homophobia and the furious persecution of homosexuals by Nazi "respectability," there were also the "male fantasies" that permeated the fascist cult of manliness, of the male body, of male bonding, that had an obvious impact on the political choices of an influential group of homo-



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sexual intellectuals in the 1930s, possibly also fanning their hatred of the Jew as the anti-type of Aryan male beauty. In any event, *Nationalism and Sexuality* was also, as a fellow historian dubbed it, Mosse's "coming-out book."

In 1979, Mosse became a member of the history department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, though his contact with Israel and his interest in Zionism predated this appointment by more than a decade. He became, as in Madison where he continued to live part of the year, a highly respected and popular teacher among Jerusalem's students. He also became a frequent guest in the intellectually vibrant circle of German Jews who in the 1920s and 1930s had moved to Palestine, and who were, in the 1970s, possibly the only true surviving remnants of Weimar culture. *Jews Beyond Judaism* (1985) may have been Mosse's belated negative reaction to the uncompromising Zionism of some of the Israelis whom he encountered.

It was, he writes, his most personal book, almost a confession of faith: of his belief in a liberal, tolerant and open-ended Judaism, whose *Bildung* was a "myth destroyer, hostile to conventional belief systems." Mosse's vignettes of Buber, and of the Scholems and their circle, are finely drawn. All in all, though, his memoir of Jerusalem remains somewhat at the surface of things. He had a love of people's foibles; but his own gentleness, and his generosity of spirit, may have blinded him to dimensions of personality that were harsher and more serious than foibles. But Jerusalem became important for him also in a very different way. It is there that he truly "came out" as he encountered David (whose family name is not given in the memoir), Mosse's first shared love.

At the end of his memoir, Mosse strikes an unexpectedly somber chord: "My acceptance of myself was set within the constant awareness of a past which refused to go away, and indeed I did never try to transform or overcome the vivid feeling that I was a survivor. The Holocaust was never very far from my mind; I could easily have perished with my fellow Jews. I suppose that I am a member of the Holocaust generation and have constantly tried to understand an event too monstrous to contemplate." Still, Mosse adds, he spent most of his scholarly life trying, from one angle or the other, to understand this same monstrosity: "Finding an explanation has been vital not only for the understanding of modern history, but also for my own peace of mind."

Such deeply felt remarks, combined with the story of Mosse's childhood and early youth in the German world, and his later scholarly investigation of the close relationship between German culture and Nazism, leave the reader of this book with an important question about this thoroughly examined life. It is a question that Mosse did not answer, and may not even have asked. How did he deal, emotionally, with his own "German Question"? How did he experience Germany after the war? What did he feel when he first returned to Germany? The memoir does not even tell us when he first returned to Germany.

There are people who do not suffer from nightmares, not because dark terrors are absent from the deeper layers of their soul but merely because the dark terrors do not visit them. Mosse was one of these lucky people spared the visitations. "I have been extraordinarily lucky throughout my life," he writes gratefully, "and this autobiography ... seems to contain much more light than shadow, which may detract from its interest, but not from my happiness." Mosse's life was probably a happy life. It was a happiness that he extracted from his troubled times by the force of his extraordinary temperament. His fascinating memoir is the story, the very affecting story, of an outsider's true homecoming: the full acceptance of himself. ■

Is Nature Good?

By CASS R. SUNSTEIN

Pandora's Picnic Basket: The Potential and Hazards of Genetically Modified Foods by Alan McHughen

(Oxford University Press, 288 pp., $25)

ARE GENETIC ENGINEERS creating dangerous new "Frankenfoods"? Many people think so, and are frightened. In their view, it is impossible to predict the effects of adding new genes to plants and other organisms. Perhaps genetically modified products will prove highly toxic to animals and human beings, or will disrupt delicate ecological balances. With these risks in mind, skeptics are now calling for an international moratorium on genetic modification of food; and more cautious critics have started a "campaign" that would require producers to label all genetically modified foods as such, supposedly for the benefit of consumers.

It is important to understand that genetically modified crops are the present, not the future. They already cover millions of acres of farmland, and they have already become commonplace in the diets of many nations. Without knowing it, most Americans regularly consume such foods, which include corn, tomatoes, soybeans, squash, radishes, and much more. Most diabetics use genetically engineered insulin. Still, notwithstanding this catastrophe-free reality, genetically modified products are meeting intense and increasing objections, often from prominent sources, including scientists, governments, even royalty. Prince Charles is quite representative: he asks, at *www.princeofwales.gov.uk*, "But how much evidence do we have? And are we looking at the right things? ... Isn't there at least a possibility that the new crops (particularly those that have been made resistant to antibiotics) will behave in unexpected ways producing toxic or allergic reactions?"

Such questions are being actively raised in legislative and regulatory bodies, too. Most nations in Europe aggressively regulate genetically modified organisms, and efforts are underway to intensify existing regulation, even to impose bans. The European Commission's directive on novel foods requires that products containing genetically modified organisms be so labeled, so that purchasers will know that this is what they are getting. In the United States, objections to genetic engineering have been relatively muted thus far. But they are growing in volume and in intensity, and the government is taking notice. If the nations of Europe are any guide, the fear of genetically modified food is contagious.

The first issue here is the most obvious one. What counts as the genetic modification (also called the genetic engineering) of food? In brief, the term refers to a collection of technologies designed to alter the genetic programming of organisms

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through changing their DNA, thus producing what are known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Especially common uses involve the creation of new crops, such as soybeans, that are resistant to pests or herbicides. Plants have been altered to promote increased seed yield, and improved resistance to diseases, and better quality (including better taste and appearance).

A recent and highly publicized example is "golden rice"—rice turned yellow as a result of beta-carotene, the nutrient that operates as a building block for vitamin A. To create "golden rice," ordinary rice is modified with DNA from daffodils (a strange thought, but perhaps not an ominous one) and bacteria. Since hundreds of thousands of children die annually from vitamin A deficiency, genetically engineered rice has the potential to save an extraordinary number of lives. And more ambitious plans are underway. Many scientists believe that it will be possible to improve medicines and food supplies for hundreds of millions of people, with enormous benefits in combating death and disease. Science has only started to explore the possibilities, which will include modification of the genetic endowments of animals and even human beings.

Alan McHughen is a Canadian researcher who has developed genetically modified plants. He is also a terrific writer, and he has produced the best available treatment of the questions raised by genetically modified foods. But in a way that is the least of his accomplishments in his new book. What makes the book distinctive is its exceptionally clear-headed and illuminating treatment of the topic of risk and technological advance in general.

McHughen believes that we should not be concerned with genetic engineering as a process. By itself, he says, the process creates no unique dangers. We should concern ourselves, instead, with particular products of the process. The potential risks of products are two-fold: threats to ecological stability and threats to human health. Ecological damage might occur if products that are harmless in some areas are recklessly transferred to other areas. Some herbicide-tolerant crops "might be acceptable in parts of Australia or the Americas but perhaps not in parts of Europe." Moreover, serious health problems could result if genes with allergenic substances are introduced into common foods. Yet McHughen thinks that these problems are soluble, and indeed pose no unusual reasons for concern: similar risks come from products not involving genetic modification, whether natural or artificial. What is necessary is a rejection of hysteria, diversified and moderate diets, careful attention to scientific reality, and a sensible regulatory strategy, covering not only GMOs but all sources of danger in food and drink.

As McHughen shows, genetic engineering of food is not entirely different from conventional breeding methods—or from what happens in nature itself. For thousands of years, human beings have tried to breed better plants. "Farmers routinely selected 'the best' of a crop or litter for continued propagation." Animal "breeds have all been carefully bred and selected for attributes desirable for domestication, meat production, and human consumption." Indeed, human breeding, and not nature, is largely responsible for modern horses and domestic dogs. (Nature produces neither Rhodesian ridgebacks nor German shepherds.) As for plants, breeders have engaged for the last century in "crossing," by which male pollen from a high-quality plant is transferred to a female part of another high-quality plant, "with the expectation that any resulting hybrid offspring will possess the superior traits of both parents." Crossing continues to be the "mainstay of plant breeding activities." Breeders also produce "intergenic crosses," which occur when two unrelated plants of different species are mated.

This process, which is rarely if ever found in nature, yields man-made crops, some of them now fed to both animals and human beings. A more high-tech practice is "mutation breeding," which involves efforts to produce mutations in crop plants by exposing them to radiation. This can alter DNA, and sometimes produce a new trait that counts as an improvement for farmers and consumers. And these are only a few of many technologies used by breeders and researchers.

For a hundred years, McHughen observes, "the breeding process has become more orthodox and directed, with breeders intentionally choosing and mating parents to generate offspring with the right combination of genetic traits." But this does not mean that genetic modification is old hat. As a technology, it is new, even revolutionary, and for one simple reason: "Never before have breeders been able to isolate single useful genes and transfer only them to develop superior varieties." What is most novel is the ability to allow "the single desired gene to be added to the complete genome of a single desirable parent." This is called recombinant DNA technology—rDNA, for short; and it is ultimately capable of producing "a new, genetically elite, population lacking the undesirable genes."

Why, then, is genetic engineering so controversial in Europe and increasingly elsewhere? McHughen believes that this is indeed a puzzle. It "is not a simple matter to dichotomize between rDNA technology and all others. Nor is it wise, if the distinction is based solely on safety concerns. GM varieties undergo far greater scrutiny for safety and environmental risks than, say, varieties developed from mutation breeding." Australian canola oil is developed from conventional techniques, whereas Canadian canola oil is developed using genetic engineering. In both cases, "the potential adverse environmental and health effects are the same—virtually nil." Yet England welcomes Australian canola oil and bans the importation of Canadian canola oil. "Why draw a line between rDNA and 'everything else' when the result would have rDNA on one side and the potentially more hazardous mutation breeding, or irradiation, on the other, 'safe' side?"

McHughen shows that there are risks on all sides of the equation, and that those who would regulate or avoid genetically engineered projects might increase the overall dangers. Perhaps you seek to avoid GMOs, and decide to eat organic foods instead. Are you better off? This is far from clear. There is nothing innocuous about "natural" products. The Food and Drug Administration says that organic foods have higher rates of contamination, including tuberculosis bacteria. Indeed, about 800 cases, and 80 deaths, appear to have resulted in 1996 from *E. coli* bacteria from manure used as a fertilizer in producing organic foods. In any event, the most obvious alternatives to GMOs are products that are created through some other humanly devised breeding strategy, such as crossing or mutation breeding. For sensible people, of course, the question is how best to reduce risks; but sensible risk-reduction does not mean that individuals, or regulators, should try to avoid genetically engineered foods.

One of McHughen's central challenges is to what might be described as the myth of nature's benevolence. Many critics of GMOs, or for that matter of pesticides, think that these are artificial interferences with natural processes and should be presumed dangerous for that reason. On this view, it is literally hazardous to tamper with nature. The concern is not entirely baseless: many ecological systems, having evolved over long periods, have achieved a high degree of stability, but are quite complex and quite delicate. Crops that have been genetically modified to resist pests might proliferate, overwhelming an area. The possibility is real.

And yet it is a large mistake to think that interferences with nature are anything new, or that nature is benevolent.

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"Even the potato, a basic staple in most diets, is very different today from its natural ancestors," McHughen writes. Traditional potatoes, unaffected by human breeding practices, are both smaller and far less uniform. Milk is pasteurized to kill the bacteria that are drawn to it; and those who prefer unpasteurized "organic" milk are taking real risks. A century ago people argued that ice from mechanical freezers was artificial and far less safe than ice from frozen lakes or rivers; but now we know that "artificial ice" is actually safer. In any case "some of the most toxic substances known to humanity comes from plants. Aflatoxins from microbes growing on nuts, oilseeds, and other food plants are one example. Aflatoxins cause high fever, jaundice, pain, vomiting, and even death." Natural chemicals in our foods include toxins and carcinogens. "Perhaps we might use GM technology to remove these anti-nutritional substances from our foods."

In these reflections McHughen is really following John Stuart Mill in his great essay "Nature," which was written in 1874. "If the artificial is not better than the natural, to what end are all the arts of life?" Mill asked. "To dig, to plough, to build, to wear clothes, are direct infringements of the injunction to follow nature.... In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's everyday performances.... That a thing is unnatural, in any precise meaning which can be attached to the word, is no argument for its being blamable." It is in precisely this spirit that Mill's heir McHughen insists that the "unnaturalness" of genetic engineering cannot count against it.

Pain Thinks of the Garden

without breath without distance
puffed and curled without sanctuary
or altar's wine without bread
without orchid or dust Pain thinks
of the body without memory
of birth without history without
wind or slope of ice without
moonlight entering the garden
darkening the trees and the statuary
the body's grieving shoulders

Laurie Lamon

WHAT ABOUT THE apparently scary (and widely publicized) stories about such risks? In some of his most amusing passages, McHughen shows that these are mostly myths. Many reports have been disseminated about the implantation of a fish gene in tomatoes (a report that seems more hilarious than frightening); but this never happened. According to numerous accounts, a Brazil nut gene has been placed in soybeans, a potentially irresponsible and dangerous use of the GM technique (because many people are severely allergic to nuts). True, a small firm in California did concoct a plan to this effect—for the benign, even heroic purpose of increasing the nutritional content of grain legumes. Yet no soybeans have ever been marketed with Brazil nut genes, precisely because researchers were alert to the risks. Or consider the recently reported scientific finding that genetically modified potatoes are toxic to rats. On inspection, the real problem was the toxicity of naturally occurring pesticides, not genetic modification at all. Nor is there much basis to worry over the creation of "superweeds" that are resistant to all herbicides and threaten to breed uncontrollably. Some genetically modified plants are indeed herbicide-resistant; but they are immune to some herbicides, not to all of them. Scientists have yet to create weeds that are immune to herbicides as such.

Yet none of this means that genetically modified organisms are risk-free, or that regulation should be eliminated. The tale of the Brazil nuts, though false, contains a valid warning about the need to screen GMOs to ensure against the sale and the consumption of allergenic ingredients. Rapeseed pollen is allergenic, and farmers and researchers often develop hay fever from working with it. GM rapeseed crops should not be grown in areas close to large population centers. Environmental assessments are also important. It is right to worry about the disruption of ecological systems through seemingly small interventions.

Some GMOs are perfectly safe for the areas for which they are intended, but they carry dangers for other regions. In Canada, for example, GM rapeseed has been approved, and adverse environmental effects are exceedingly unlikely. But the United Kingdom has a different ecology; and as McHughen emphasizes, planting of genetically engineered rapeseed might disrupt a delicate environmental balance. Or consider GM crops that have been engineered to withstand cold spells (this technology does not yet exist, but it is coming). Such crops would have a significant advantage over wild crops, in a way that could be extremely disruptive. It is necessary to guard against this risk.

Shouldn't GMOs at least be labeled as such, so that consumers will know what they are eating? The issue has received a great deal of attention in Europe and India, where mandatory labeling is immensely popular, and it is likely to be a serious question in the United States soon. At first glance it might seem right to urge that GMOs should be labeled. Polls everywhere suggest that such a step would be supported by strong majorities. In many contexts, labeling has done considerable good, both by deterring production and use of risky products and by ensuring that any risks are assumed voluntarily.

And yet McHughen is extremely skeptical about mandatory labeling, for a variety of reasons. First, he argues, any such requirement would be an administrative nightmare. What exactly would the label say, and on what products would it be imposed? (Sellers do not always know all of the ingredients of food.) McHughen also contends that it is hard to defend a mandatory labeling program for GMOs without imposing labeling requirements on other products. Why mandatory labeling for GMOs without labeling for crossing and mutation breeding? Most important, labeling might not make consumers better informed. The usual purpose of consumer labels is either to offer nutritional information (now required by the Food and Drug Administration) or to give warnings about risks to self and others (as in the case of cigarettes). GM labels could not be justified on either ground. On the contrary, a label might be technically accurate but deceptive—if, as is likely, it leads people to think that there is a risk when one does not exist in fact.

Instead of labeling GM foods, McHughen proposes a public database for all products and all processes, available and maintained on the Internet, to let people know not only about GM products, but also about mutation breeding and other approaches. He emphasizes that while GMOs have been grown on millions of acres and consumed by millions of people over a period of years, no environmental hazards or health issues have arisen. Still, McHughen is alert to possible abuses and future hazards, and so he wants to accompany the public database with a regulatory apparatus designed not to kill GMOs with paperwork, but to ensure rigorous testing to prevent health risks (recall the possibility of placing allergens in crops) and environmental problems (recall the danger of ecological instability).

This is McHughen's closing plea:

> What is the single greatest food-related threat to your health? Is it GMO's? Synthetic pesticides? Natural toxins?...

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> None comes close. The greatest real damage is chronic anxiety over diet. Instead of worrying—almost always needlessly—over whether or not your food supply is safe, or if you're eating too much pesticide, or not getting enough fibre, or too much cholesterol, or too little polyunsaturated fat, simplify your life and diet. Eat balanced and varied meals. Stop worrying so much about your food; it's almost certainly healthier than you are.... If you need to lose weight, consult your physician, not the 'miracle diets.'... Moderation and variety are the key. Not only will you relish a diverse selection of tasty nutritious foods, but the occasional anti-nutritional components, whether natural or synthetic, will be diluted and compensated by the volume and balance provided by everything else. Enjoy your meals. Bon appetit.

McHughen has written an admirable book, which persuasively establishes its general points: that nature is hardly benevolent; that "safety" is a matter of degree, not of absolutes; that when regulating one risk, we often increase other risks, and thus make life less safe; that labeling has important social uses, but there are distinctive reasons for labeling, and any policy of mandatory disclosure should be undertaken with those reasons in mind.

STILL, MCHUGHEN'S ARGUMENT has some real gaps. He says a great deal about the risks of genetic modification, but he says little about the benefits. Skeptics might agree that the risks are speculative and probably controllable, but they will also insist that since the process is not likely to do much good, even the speculative danger is not worth running. The best answer here is that genetic modification has already delivered considerable benefits, among other things to human health, and that the potential benefits, above all for poor people in poor nations, have only started to be tapped. McHughen does refer to better nutritional composition, longer shelf lives, and products with modified, lower-calorie sugars; but his discussion of benefits is strangely brief and sketchy.

Sometimes McHughen crosses the line that separates science from advocacy. I think that he is correct to oppose labeling of GMOs, mandatory or otherwise; but his arguments against labeling place far too much emphasis on administrative difficulties. Most of these problems are not unique to the context of GMOs, and if they were the principal objections to labeling, they would not count for much. McHughen also makes excessive use of a popular but inadequate argument, of the following form: why should controls or restrictions be imposed on X if they are not also imposed on Y, which creates similar risks? To be sure, the question might show that it is arbitrary to regulate X without also regulating Y; but it does not show what it purports to, that X should not be regulated at all. It might be better to regulate X, and not Y, than to regulate neither of them. McHughen's occasional refrain—if we worry about GMOs, why not worry about X, Y, and Z as well?—seems too defensive, the stuff of corporate self-justification familiar from the apologetics of gun lobbyists and the congressional testimony of tobacco company executives.

Nor is there much to be said on behalf of McHughen's only original policy recommendation: a public database on the processes used to produce foods. Would such a database really be useful? To whom, precisely, would it be useful? True, more information is usually better than less, but why should a complicated database of this kind be created, if the underlying processes are both complex and safe? Far more useful would be a reliable database with the most accurate and up-to-date information not about the processes that underlie our food, but about the risks that we actually face, in food and drink and perhaps in other things, too. Such information would help people to separate fact from fiction, in a way that would be genuinely valuable.

An additional weakness of McHughen's account involves his inability to explain the remarkable difference between Europe and the United States on the topic of genetic modification. As I have noted, many Europeans are extremely alarmed by GMOs, and hence European nations regulate GMOs heavily; whereas Americans have seemed, until recently, indifferent to the potential problems. As McHughen briefly speculates, a part of the explanation might be historical. With the Nazi experience closer to home, Europeans might well be skeptical of any scientific experimentation designed to improve races, even races of plants.

But surely a part of the explanation, a much less elevated part, has to do with interest-group pressures. In world markets, European farmers must compete with American farmers, who enjoy some significant advantages over them, in large measure owing to the practice of genetic engineering. Any effort to frighten people about GMOs is likely to help farmers from Europe, who are well aware of that fact, and not unwilling to fuel and to exploit public fears for their own benefit. This is not the first time that fear-mongering has served narrow economic interests.

Most people are not nervous about risks unless other people are nervous about them. Once people share a common anxiety—perhaps because of media attention, perhaps because of interest-group propaganda—they will tend to talk about it, and the result of the talk will be to amplify that anxiety, even to create cascades. Once a certain degree of anxiety has spread, large numbers of people will acquire it. Hence relatively small initial differences can be magnified by social influences, especially when newspapers and television become involved. My hunch is that this helps to explain why nuclear power is a non-issue in France but a source of serious and continuing concern in America. With respect to genetic modification of food, it helps to explain the difference between Europe and the United States as well.

And there is a larger problem. It is much too simple merely to hum, as McHughen seems to in his less cautious moments, "don't worry, be happy," or to suggest that all we have to fear is fear itself. Notwithstanding his general and laudable enthusiasm for evidence, McHughen offers none to support the striking (but not terribly plausible) suggestion that "chronic anxiety over diet" is the greatest of all food-related threats to health. Unhealthy diets *are* a serious source of unhealthy lives, and far more attention needs to be paid to the linked problems of poor diet and insufficient exercise. An astonishing amount has been learned about diet and health in recent years, with the explosion of knowledge about the value of fruits and vegetables and the risks of cholesterol, obesity, alcohol, and smoking; and here much remains to be learned. McHughen's presentation would have been better if he had been more specific about the nature of a "diverse selection of tasty nutritious foods."

Yet it would be wrong to end on a churlish note. McHughen skillfully demonstrates the senselessness of thinking that the more natural something is, the better it is for you. If a nation wants to protect the environment and the health of animals and people alike, it will often have to tamper with nature. With respect to health and safety, Mill was right to say that the "duty of man is not to follow" nature "but to amend it" and McHughen offers a fine application of Mill's point. And if we regulate one risk, we need to make sure that we are not actually increasing overall risk, as a result of leading people to use less-safe substitutes. Fear of risk often leads people to protect themselves against genuine hazards; but it can also be a serious problem, partly because fear can be exceedingly unpleasant, partly because fear can produce less-safe behavior, partly because, other things being equal, fear really is not good for you. These notions are not the worst starting points for official regulators, not to mention those of us seeking to manage risks in our own lives. ■

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Shalom, Chaver

EVERY YOM KIPPUR SINCE 1973 evokes in me the grim memory of the Yom Kippur War. This year it evoked more than a memory. From the moment the assembly began its haunting Kol Nidre service ("All the congregation of the people Israel shall be forgiven, as well as the stranger who dwells among them...") on Sunday night until the end of this last of the Days of Awe, 25 hours later, when we linked our very identity to the fate of Jerusalem ("Rejoice with Jerusalem. Celebrate with her, all who love her, and all who once mourned her..."), that never-forgotten war was a living presence in our penance and in our prayers. Atonement for Jews is both personal and collective, and the *mahzor*, the holiday prayer book, does not exhaust our iniquities. The rabbis at New York's B'nai Jeshurun amplified our burdens by enumerating several concrete and timely sins, one of which audibly roiled some of the worshipers: "We have sinned against You by rushing to violence and crawling to peace." But no one—not even I—made a fuss. All of us can admit there are times when, as the Yom Kippur liturgy states, "the people Israel acted in error."

BUT, IF I READ THE CONGREGATION correctly, very few believed that particular confession to apply to Israel at this moment. Quite the contrary. Ehud Barak's government has abrogated virtually every one of the country's historic and strategic red lines, put its population under threat of hostile arms, provided many of the practical aspects of Palestinian statehood (including the weapons now used against Israel), and—unimaginably to me at least—actually conceded (and endangered) whole areas of Jerusalem with deep Jewish spiritual meaning. This is the real context of the rage and riot that swept last week from nascent Palestine to the rest of the Arab world, including places where women who have never come together for their own rights now demonstrate against the Jews. But how do the Palestinians, who two months ago stood on the verge of achieving a state that squeezed Israel back almost to its 1949 cease-fire lines, justify the violence that was bound to take some of their children's lives? One explanation is the death-denying idea of martyrdom: Last week's funerals of Palestinian "martyrs" were often as ecstatic as they were sorrowful. They were an engine of frenzy, which is to say also an engine of history.

LET'S FACE THE STARK AND UNHAPPY truth: The assumptions of the tranquilizing diplomacy that started with the strained handshakes on the White House lawn seven years ago and quickly hardened into dogma lie exposed today as mirages. This was never a conflict like other conflicts, in which a concession from one side is reciprocated with a concession from the other. After all, at Camp David Israel bowed to President Clinton's smarmy cajoling and gave away more land than any previous Israeli government had contemplated, and more land than the current Israeli polity would likely accept—and still it was not enough. Still, there was no corresponding concession from the other side—not even close. At Camp David, the very idea of "land for peace" revealed its emptiness. The arguments about 1 percent more of the West Bank here and 13 percent there were all artifice. Understandably, this is devastating to the architects of Oslo. But Shimon Peres has admitted it, as has every honest Israeli dove. Sadly for Israel, Barak seems unable yet to concede a mistake. Maybe he will come to his senses, or be forced to.

BUT CLINTON WON'T, BELIEVE ME. This was to be his vindication before history. He even worked the phones all night, his aides told us, as if that were the way to break one culture's hatred of another. As for Sandy Berger, he is incapable of giving up his lifelong, trade lawyer's conviction that every enemy is a potential customer. And the lady from Foggy Bottom with the hundred ugly pins? Almost every Israeli I've spoken with who dealt with her in these proceedings felt her rancor and resentment toward the Jewish state. Perhaps that is why she literally scurried after Arafat last week, trying to lock him in our Paris embassy. She was giving him everything he needed to put these Jews in their place, and he wasn't taking it. This is love unrequited, poor woman.

I ASSUME IT WASN'T RICHARD HOLbrooke who decided to abstain when that transparently prevaricating resolution was brought before the U.N. Security Council over the weekend. It was Clinton who wouldn't shoulder the burden of a truthful veto. Clinton's much-vaunted love for Israel, it turns out, was just another piece of theater, and in this real-life drama he now declares himself neutral. Well, *shalom, chaver*. According to the October 9 *New York Times*, his aides feared that a U.S. veto would "put American lives at stake in the region." Ours, then, is the most spineless of great powers.

BARAK'S PROMISE TO WITHDRAW from Lebanon helped elect him prime minister, and, when he carried it out, it was widely deemed a triumph. The pullout occurred while my wife and I were on our spring sabbatical in Jaffa, and even I, mistrustful and hawkish, had to admit that it seemed to work: At least there were no more Hezbollah missiles from across the border. I was wrong. What the Palestinians learned from Hezbollah is that they could win concessions without even signing a worthless piece of paper, and that the United States would continue to press Israel for more and more accommodations so that ultimately another worthless piece of paper would be signed and a big fest held once again on the White House lawn.

ISRAEL DARE NOT LET THIS HAPPEN. It should not reward a rampage that is a prelude to much worse. We have lived through a seven-year experiment in Middle East diplomacy, and we now have empirical evidence that the Palestinian leaders intend to revoke history by any means at their disposal. For a very long time, we were continually assured that there are prominent Palestinian leaders who wish to do no such thing. But, as *The Boston Globe* pointed out, the rocks and stones hurled after Friday prayers from the Noble Sanctuary at Jewish worshipers at the Western Wall were hurled on orders from none other than Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian Authority's minister for Jerusalem affairs and almost every Western journalist's model of a Palestinian moderate. Many of Barak's concessions now seem at once perilous and beside the point. In any case, they do not command the support of Israel's democracy. So Palestine will not be what it could have been, and the Palestinians will have no one to blame but themselves.

ON YOM KIPPUR, B'NAI JESHURUN'S Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon implored God that Israeli children and Palestinian children would soon play together in the streets of Jerusalem. Skeptical though I am about the prospect, it is a prayer I intoned with him, earnestly and without ridicule. But I confess that I wondered aloud to my daughter and son-in-law whether there was a mosque anywhere where the *qadi* or mullah would utter the same prayer. I fear that I, and we, have always known the answer.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Choices I Never Dreamed Possible

By Carol Butts, shown with Quentin and Evan

When my daughter Evan finished fifth grade in the Milwaukee Public Schools, she could not multiply or write cursive. Yet, her report cards were good, and her teachers had not reported academic problems.

As the magnitude of this weighed on me, as it would for any parent, I sought options. But our family's income is limited. It seemed as though we had few choices.

When I learned about the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, I was ecstatic.

Through the Milwaukee program, Evan enrolled at Sister Clara Muhammed School. In two years there, her schoolwork has really improved. The school does whatever it takes. Failing is NOT an option.

I also enrolled my youngest son, Quentin, at Clara Muhammed. In public school, he struggled to be understood. Quentin had many opinions to share, but the teachers didn't seem to have time. At Clara Muhammad, the teachers have listened. They have helped Quentin learn to be more tactful.

I also have two sons in high school. Each has made different choices.

Parental school choice is widespread – unless you're poor.

Brandon has used the choice program to attend Messmer High School, a private school. Most of his classmates are African American, from families with limited income. Messmer has a 98 percent graduation rate, higher than almost all the public high schools in Milwaukee.

Timothy chose a public high school. He wanted to play football, and Messmer doesn't have a team. Timothy knows that if he doesn't get high grades, he'll be at Messmer next year, with Brandon.

Evan will finish middle school this year. Because of the choice program, she has options. She might pick a public high school, or she could choose a private school such as Messmer.

Without the choice program, my husband and I would have none of these alternatives. We just couldn't afford them.

For us, school choice has made a quality education available to our children. It has created a foundational path for them. It gives them the educational, emotional, and moral development that we try to instill at home.

BAEO Board President Howard Fuller thanks the following for support of BAEO's planning and organizational efforts: The Joyce Foundation, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, The Helen Bader Foundation, The Walton Family Foundation, The Fleck Foundation, The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, Q3 Company, The American Education Reform Council, BAEO Board Members, and anonymous donors.

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Black Alliance for Educational Options

for more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

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KIDS & TOBACCO

Kids should not smoke. Nor should they have access to tobacco products. We believe there is broad agreement on this important issue.

At Philip Morris USA, we are committed to dealing responsibly with the complex problem of underage smoking. There is no single, easy answer to this issue. Many experts suggest the best way to address underage smoking is through broad-based, integrated approaches that include communications, education, community involvement and access prevention.

As part of our commitment to play a role in reducing underage smoking, we have created a Youth Smoking Prevention Department whose sole purpose is to develop and support programs to help reduce the incidence of youth smoking. We've dedicated significant resources—over $100 million last year—toward initiatives based on the key components listed above. We are spending another $100 million against these initiatives in 2000.

Our effort includes support for school-based programs, one of which has been recognized for prevention excellence by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other national organizations. We're also running national advertising campaigns: one that encourages kids not to smoke, and one that urges parents to talk to their kids about not smoking.

To help prevent minors' access to tobacco products, we support and help fund the Coalition for Responsible Tobacco Retailing's nationwide "We Card" retailer education and training program. This effort has helped train over 500,000 retail store employees to reject attempted purchases by minors.

Working to help prevent youth smoking is important and it's the right thing to do for our company and for our employees. It's also the right thing to do on behalf of our shareholders and our adult customers. Everyone has a stake in solving the problem of underage smoking. At Philip Morris USA, we are working to help find answers.

For more information about our youth smoking prevention efforts, visit our Web site at www.philipmorrisusa.com. If you don't have Internet access, please call 1-877-PMUSAWEB.

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